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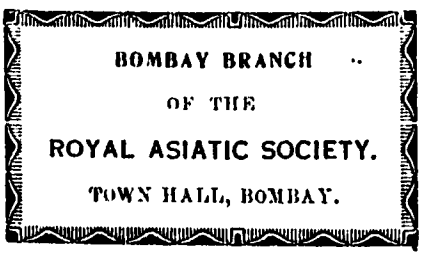

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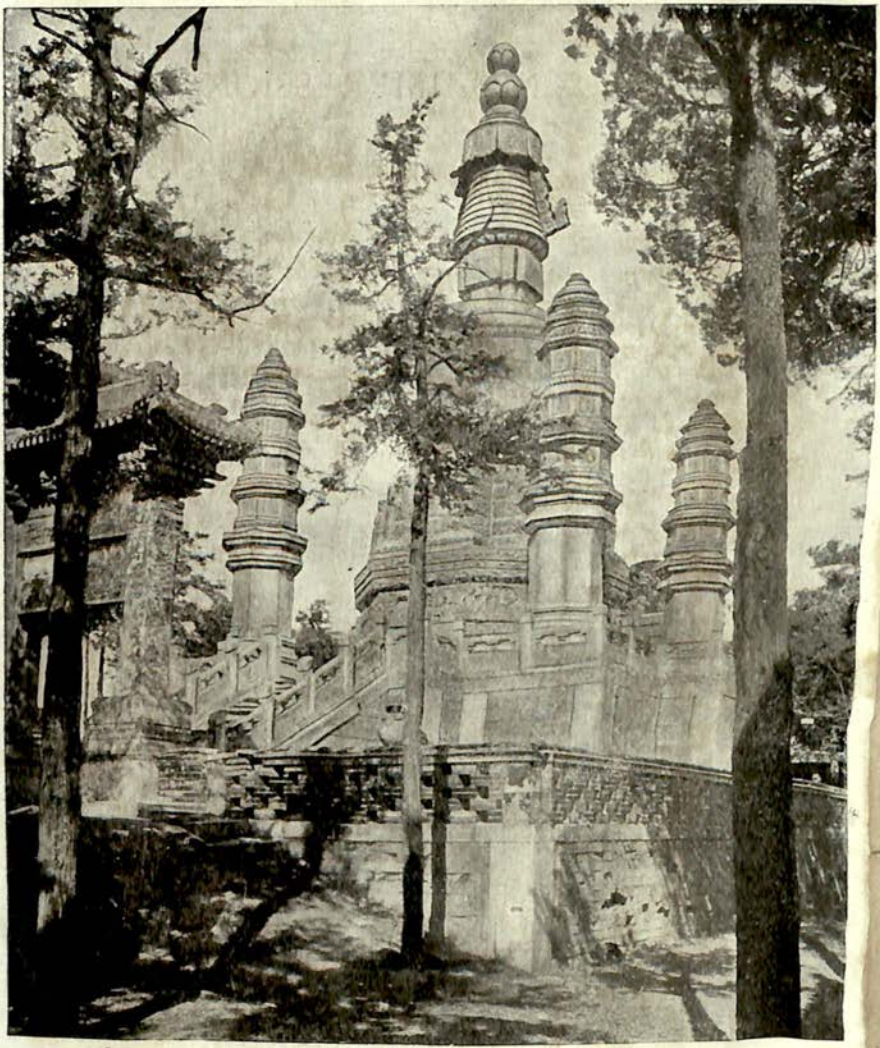

STÛPA IN THE YELLOW TEMPLE: HUANG SSŬ.

THE NEW CHINA

A TRAVELLER'S IMPRESSIONS

BY

HENRI BOREL

OFFICIAL CHINESE INTERPRETER IN THE DUTCH EAST-INDIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH BY

C. THIEME

83496

WITH FORTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

T. FISHER UNWIN

LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

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INTRODUCTION

PART OF THE CHINESE WALL.

INTRODUCTION

THE awakening of China to national consciousness is a process suddenly excited by the thunder of Japanese guns after a long period of silent brooding, and it is beyond the pale of possibility to estimate the immense influence it may have on the evolution of the whole world in the domain of politics, economics, science, and art.

Until a few years ago there was, as a matter of fact, no Chinese people, in the sense of a single conception comprehending all Chinese. China was an unwieldy, inert mass of heterogeneous provinces and peoples, perhaps only kept together by the difficulty of falling asunder. When, in 1894, the war in the North was waged against Japan, the South Chinese in the Fuhkien Province did not concern themselves with it, and it left the Chinese in the colonies beyond the seas as cold as a war between Bulgaria and Servia might have done. Up to the time of the Russo-Japanese War I hardly ever heard any Chinaman in Singapore or Batavia express the slightest interest in what might happen in Chinese politics. A Chinese emigrant in the English, American, or Dutch colonies might have ancestral tombs or prayer-houses somewhere

in China which might bind him to a certain spot in the land of his early life, but his interest was only associated with that particular place of his origin, not with the native country, conceived as a national unit.

A Chinese from Shanghai was, moreover, as distinct from one hailing from Canton as a Spaniard from a Frenchman, and the same applies to a Chinese from Foochow, as compared with one from Peking, &c. &c. One usually speaks of Chinese "dialects," but "languages" would be the more correction expression. A Chinaman from the north could not understand one from the south; a domestic from Amoy could not talk to a tramping tailor from Shanghai. China was a heterogeneous mass of peoples who had only one tie in common—the written language, but this amounts to no more than do the Roman numbers in Europe to-day. The number X, for instance, is the same all over Europe, but the Englishman reads it as *Ten*, the Frenchman as *Dix*, the Italian as *Dieci*, and so on. In addition there is the so-called Chinese of the Mandarins, the Kuan hua or Ching yin. This language was spoken more or less generally in the north, but in the south only by high dignitaries and by highly cultured literates. Its slightly different Pekingese variety was the language of the Court and of diplomats, but in the south it was not nearly so much used as French is in the more refined sets of Europeans. Only a select few of the officials and the literates knew the Chinese of the Mandarins; the overwhelming large

proportion of people, especially in the south, did not.

A single popular language—one that could be used among all the civilised middle classes from Canton to Shanghai, from Peking to Foochow and Amoy—did not exist. The Chinese of various southern provinces and districts of China remained foreigners to each other; they did not feel themselves as belonging to one brotherhood, as the possessors of one common treasure—the national vernacular by which the national mind may give utterance to its most sacred and intimate sentiments.

It is for this reason that I never anticipated the possibility of this conception suddenly emerging into a reality—one Chinese nation, one Chinese language, as there is one English nation and one English language.

But the roaring thunder of the Japanese guns over Chinese seas and the plains and mountains of Chinese Manchuria roused into activity the latent forces slumbering in the heterogeneous, indolent mass. Exactly how it came about no one really knows. At the back of the world's history mystical, spiritual powers are at work unseen, raising and lowering the rhythm of those great movements of the world wherein nations and dynasties rise to their culmination and then fall into decay.

It was as if a magnetic current, an electric vibration, passed through the body of this gigantic colossus, this magnificent, huge, primeval creature of prehistoric periods, apparently dead but in reality only slumbering through the centuries, on whose

back foreign parasites had settled down, stinging and wounding and nesting in its skin. Suddenly the heavy, thick eyelids are half opened, a tremor of new life shivers through the unwieldy frame, the thick, flabby skin contracts, the tremendous legs make the earth resound; and with a cry reverberating through the whole world, it hails a new day.

Here we had not only Japan defeating Russia on the plains of Manchuria, but a fragment of the East—the coloured—shaking off the West—the White—which reeled under the repulse. This terrific occurrence rang in a new era for the East, and the Chinese, the Hindu, the Mohammedan, awoke trembling, divining with that Eastern intuition which is like second-sight, the hardly credible possibilities of the future. And then the abstract idea, so ultra-realistic because it is abstract, according to Eastern wisdom, the idea of "the East for the East," born in the gore of battlefields and ensanguined seas, saw the light.

It is the idea now hovering over hundreds of millions of souls, from Benares to Peking, from Calcutta to Batavia, and finding an echo far away in the hearts of all who are coloured, yellow and brown—in farthest America, in Capetown and the Transvaal, in Australia, in Alexandria, in Constantinople.

Europe is not yet immediately threatened by the Yellow Peril of bayonets, airships, and armoured cruisers; but there is the much greater, much stronger—because spiritual and mystical—danger

of the Yellow Idea; indestructible and irresistible like all spiritual forces in the history of the universe, mightier than the thickest armour-plates, more far-reaching than the monsters of Krupp or Creusot. One can level to the ground by heavy artillery any armoured fort, destroy *Dreadnoughts* by mines and torpedos, but the spiritual idea fermenting among hundreds of millions cannot be exterminated by material weapons.

I put this spiritual idea in the forefront because I want, in this book, besides giving artistic impressions of Peking, to convey a foreboding of the significance for China and for the whole world of the reform caused by the Pan-Chinese movement.

Much has already been written about railways and concessions, about loans and the exploitation of mines. Many have pondered and meditated on the reform of the Chinese people and the awakening of the Young Chinese. But it has not been clearly understood that what is really happening in China at the present moment is merely the outward symptom of a single inward idea arising in Eastern Asia, a pulse of the rhythm in which the whole world moves. European diplomacy and European sinology ought to understand in the first place that any appreciation of the Young Chinese movement must start from the point of view that the idea "the East for the East" is essentially spiritual, even mystical, and will not at all carry with it only the material movements of economical and trading interests. It involves immensely more

than social reform and the expansion of trade. China with her four hundred millions is now moving upward in the world's course, because in future she will work mightily towards the spiritual and intellectual progress of all humanity.

Stated briefly, the beginnings of the reform, as far as outward signs go, were as follows: After the defeat of the big, hairy Russian by the small, brave Japanese, China began to realise her own latent power; she began to consider how it came about that this small David had been able to slay this gigantic Goliath. It was as simple as the problem of Columbus's egg, but it took centuries after centuries for China to see this egg standing on its end.

About three years ago I, with a Chinese friend, visited a private Chinese school somewhere in Java and opened the desk of an urchin scarcely ten years old. I picked up his exercise book of compositions, and what I read there I may copy here without any comment, so exactly does it reflect the actual situation. He wrote: "Small Japan defeated big China. Afterwards small Japan defeated big Russia. How was it able to accomplish this? You think by its ships and soldiers. But that is not so. It defeated Russia by its knowledge, by its education. It defeated the stupid Chinese and Russian soldiers because education is so good in Japan; because the Japanese people are instructed in the sciences and are no longer ignorant. There is hardly a Japanese soldier who cannot read and write. China is much bigger than Japan and much

bigger than Russia or any empire of Europe, and it has more than four hundred millions of inhabitants. When these people are instructed and know, China will be much more powerful than little Japan or the strongest peoples of Europe. Therefore the first thing China wants is instruction. It must start with that. Then China will become the first empire of the world."

This short essay of a ten-year-old child from the Dutch colony offers a striking instance of what now fills the Chinese popular mind, of what is taught in Chinese schools. Education has been reformed all over China and—perhaps forced upon it by public opinion—education is now the foremost care of the Chinese Government. It was initiated by an impulse from Japan. Japanese schoolmasters opened in China the first modern Elementary School and were followed by Chinese scholars who had studied in Japan. Afterwards the Government took the official lead and had schools erected as far as possible all over China. The general curriculum of these schools is formed on a Japanese model, this again being an imitation of a European one rendered suitable to Eastern conditions. The present governmental programme contains a promise of compulsory education. Educational appliances, originally from Japan, are now being printed and manufactured chiefly in China. There is a separate Ministry for Education established in Peking, and inspectors of High Schools and Grammar Schools are appointed by this department. A few schools have already been opened

and a larger number are provided for. There are still not a few Japanese teachers in China, but there is a growing tendency to substitute for them Chinese who have studied in Japan. And in China itself Preparatory Schools are being erected for the education of elementary teachers.

But the most important thing is that in all these schools the Chinese of the Mandarins (Ching yin) is being taught. Why? Because—and here lies the central importance of the Chinese education question, wherever there are Chinese settlements—because the awakened national sentiment has discerned that unity of language is indispensable to national unity. What is at present possible to a small part only of the present generation in China will be possible to the whole of the next generation now attending the Elementary Schools: the Chinese people will speak one common language —that of the Mandarins.

Consequently the Chinese of the Mandarins has become the greatest good of modern China, because of all means it is the only one, the saving measure by which unity of State and nation can be accomplished. It is impossible to predict what may be the consequences of this reformed elementary education, soon to be followed by High Schools. The scope is so vast, so comprehensive. Everything pertaining to modern civilisation is praised and explained in the reading books of these schools of the people. A few years ago telegraphs, railways, telephones, were of evil origin, sorceries of foreign devils, temples and tombs

were obstacles in the way of tracks and roads. At the present moment railways, telegraphs, telephones, balloons, radio-telegraphy, everything that is modern and customary in Europe, is expounded in the national schools as the indispensable means to civilise China and put it on the same footing as the European States. Even Buddhist and Taoist temples are everywhere being equipped as schools—and it is well to notice the symbolic significance thereof. Idols are removed from the temples: modern science walks in. This single fact means the complete mental revolution of a people of over four hundred millions; and the aspect of the entire world will be altered by it.

Moreover, thousands of Chinese students go to Japan and America—a small minority come to Europe as well; they imbibe there the milk of modern science and new ideas and return to China, somewhat conceited and overbearing, but full of a sublime ideal: to devote their lives to the education of their native country. Amongst them there are numerous well-to-do people who become schoolmasters without taking any pay, from pure love of their ideal, and who disseminate knowledge as the apostles disseminated love.

The Chinese have always been abused as inferior, as dirty, cowardly, and cruel, and particularly as materialistic and egotistical. Missionaries, and even learned professors who ought to know better, joined in, and (as happens everywhere through mistaking external deteriorations for the original, ancient, internal essence) they described

the Chinese as a nation of heathen, full of superstition and witchcraft, steeped in materialism and egotism, too much debased to feel devotion to high ideals. Only a few have always known that this characterisation was untruthful. Those who had thoroughly got into touch with Chinese literature and philosophy, not as dry-as-dust philologues but as artists and philosophers, knew better what was the real essence of the Chinese national soul.

About twelve or fourteen years ago the present author attempted to explain how the wisdom and beauty of ancient China revealed themselves to him.

In this book I shall try to make the reader understand how I felt the advent of a new wisdom and beauty when I wandered in China's capital, Peking, among the wonders of an ancient beauty and wisdom.

This book is meant more as an artistic than as a scientific work. I do not intend to work with figures and statistics and linguistic lore. I may not be able now and again wholly to avoid considerations and remarks of a political or economical nature. But the chief object of my book is to avail myself of the poet's right to give a chain of personal and subjective impressions and to describe how I felt the tragic death of ancient beauty, overpowered by all that is ugly and vulgar in modern things. I want to record impressions I received when living in Peking at the beginning of reform through Western civilisation, when the electric light already glittered in the macadamised

modern boulevard, and telegraph and telephone wires were strung across the old imperial city.

But I also hope to describe how after sadness for this grievous death came consolation and confidence; for behind the tragedy I constantly and unmistakably perceived the great immutable purpose of the world. I was aware of the spiritual idea which, after decay and death, shall bring to China, through travail and conflict, a new wisdom and a new beauty.

HENRI BOREL.

PEKING, *December*, 1909.

THE NEW CHINA

OLD BRIDGE OUTSIDE PEKING.

To face p. 25.

THE NEW CHINA

CHAPTER I

ARRIVAL IN PEKING

IN how utterly Western a way had everything been managed in Tientsin! As entirely Western as if I were travelling somewhere in Europe. The omnibus of "Astor House," with a liveried runner behind, took me comfortably to the station, where I entered a *train-de-luxe* of the kind that one sees at Monte Carlo or Biarritz. Everything was ship-shape: the seats soft and clean, the brass polished, the gangways roomy, the electric fan ready for use over my head. In the next carriage there was even a saloon provided with easy-chairs and with large, wide windows from which one could survey the landscape. The train started with absolute punctuality, and with a smooth, subtle, springy movement as if something precious were being conveyed.

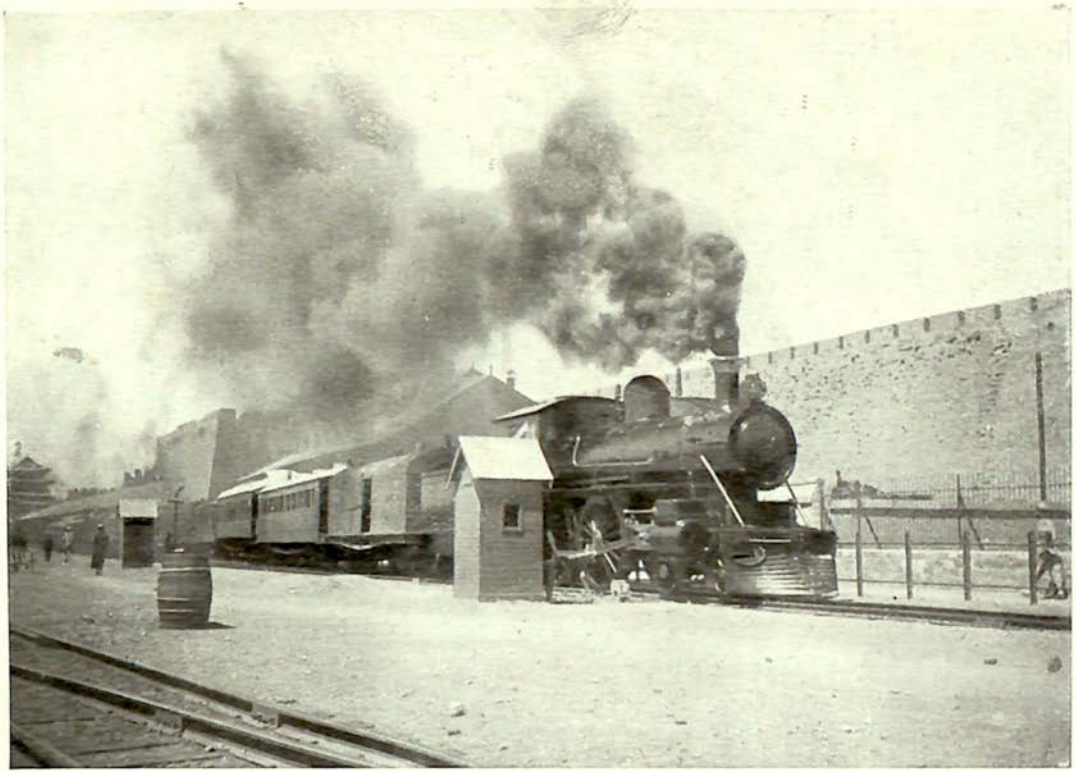
I sat wondering whether I were dreaming, half believing, half doubting if I were not beguiled by sleep. The journey had nothing strange, nothing

romantic about it: it was entirely different from what I had expected.

When I received at Sourabaya the telegram that called me to Peking, I felt a shock, as if summoned by some remote, mysterious voice. At last! at last! The dream of long years was now about to be fulfilled; the unattainable was brought near. And the promise of fulfilment was as sweet as the flowering of a half-forgotten love.

Peking the holy, the mysterious, the City of Emperors, had always gleamed in the remotest background of my thoughts as something inaccessible, something too overwhelming really to behold, actually to set foot in. It was magnificence and terror, beauty and death. To enter Peking would be to pass through the gates of a golden secret. It would be desecrated by European feet, soiled by Western hands. It was a mystery of marble, white as the lily and yellow as gold, wherein had dwelt Emperors who were Sons of Heaven—T'ien Tzŭ. It was a mystery of hoarded treasures of bronze and silk and porcelain; of richer beauty than is told of by the most exquisite Eastern fairy-tale. And that City of Gods and Emperors, of marble, bronze, and porcelain, contained temples from whence came the greatest literature of this land of letters, and where sublime wisdom made its home.

During many years I had lived and wandered in the south, in Amoy, Changchow, Canton, and Macao; but Peking, far away in the north, had always remained for me the Great Unknown,



EXPRESS TRAIN NEAR PEKING'S ANCIENT RAMPARTS.

although I knew well that before I died I must see it.

And now this half-hopeless dream, this intense longing of years and years, was to be fulfilled. The possibility of this consummation produced a vague sorrow, as if it were almost a profanation—for dreams unrealised are more sacred than dreams fulfilled, just as music in the heart is sweeter than music in the ear.

And now I was sitting there in amazement, and somewhat disillusioned, on the soft cushions of the luxurious carriage; crudely real and vulgar and yet bearing me to such a mystery.

I certainly had heard of reforms in China, and of the railways and telegraphs that defeated the terrors of the Fêng-Shui powers. I had known in Java, both theoretically and practically, that the tremor of a new idea had shivered through China's national soul after its slumber of centuries, but I had not expected an up-to-date *train-de-luxe* to take me on modern springs to the Imperial City of the Holy Secret. It was in this way that I had travelled to Nice and Vienna.

And yet this was surely no dream, for in the compartment behind me two mandarins, in spacious garments, were seated, talking in the deep, throaty sounds of Pekingese, and gesticulating regally with their graceful hands. Many Chinese were in the other compartment, smoking and sipping tea. And there spread the landscape, full of Chinese quaintness: the clay houses where played plump Chinese babies, already wrapped in their autumn clothes,

with here and there the droll writhing dragons over buildings where floated a yellow Chinese flag. I was surprised to see in an open field the smart and correct evolutions of some modern-looking soldiers in khaki, spruce as a Japanese select guard. But they were Chinese soldiers, drilled and trained in the modern fashion, that I flew past in dumb astonishment—I who, fifteen years ago, seated on my pony, had seen the mean, sordid gangs and dared to ride into their ranks and break them. It affected me unpleasantly again, for the old conditions were dear to me who had passed the most delightful portion of my life in Ancient China.

Thus grumbling within myself, smoking cigarettes, and reading the newspaper, I travelled on for three hours from Tientsin; scarcely taking in the names of the stations I passed, except some which I recognised as having figured in the terrible accounts of the Boxers' atrocities in 1900. How comfortably, in what a completely modern way, was I now going from Tientsin to Peking! In three hours, sitting still, in my own eyes even slightly ridiculous, I was covering the same distance that less than ten years ago required from four to five days of steamboat misery on the Pei-Ho. The very same distance separated from final safety the besieged in the British Legation, when in that sinister year 1900 they were nearly mad with despair, their nerves overwrought and death and destruction everywhere around them. It seemed quite incredible to me, sitting in this train, that Seymour and his brave men once had to return

PEKING'S OUTER WALL.

To face p. 29.

disgraced and in peril of their lives, for during nearly two months, from June 20th to August 14th, no rescue could cross this intervening space, while in Peking the few hundreds of besieged felt the threatening approach of subtle torture and the agonies of death. They were entirely cut off from the outer world, a solitary band in a city of a hundred thousand foes, who hated them as the East hates the West, as the Old hates the New.

Would the ancient dreams have disappeared altogether? Would nothing be left of the fairy-tale, of the grand Chinese romance, of Peking, the colossal capital where throbs the heart of that vast empire of four hundred millions?

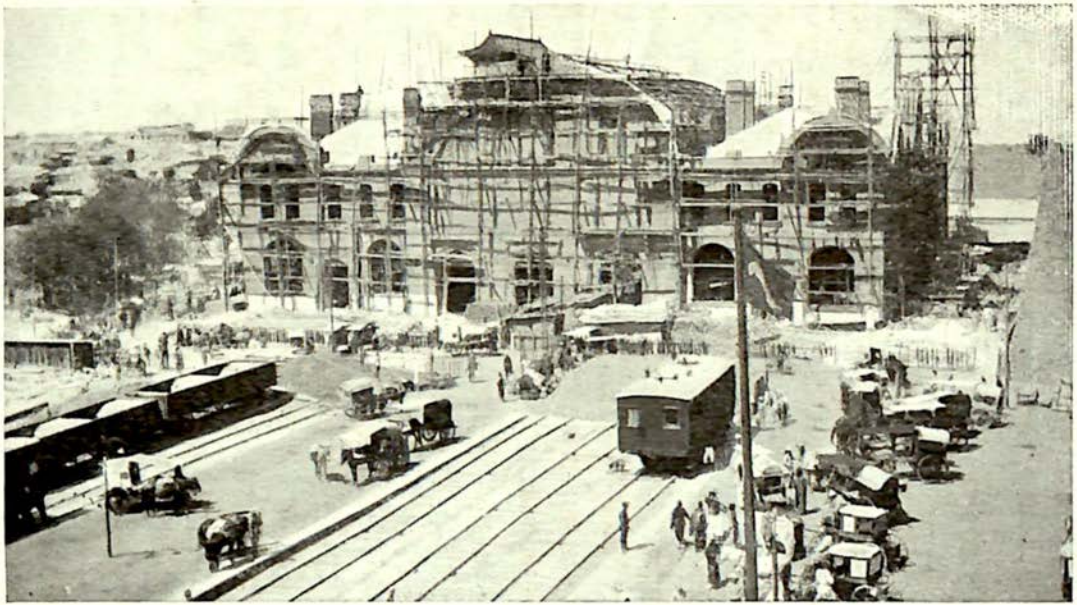
But see! what is looming in the yellowish-grey plain? Walls, walls, grim battlemented walls. We rush through them. How high, how grey with the darkness of centuries! This is as old as Babylon, as Jericho, as Nineveh! These are the mighty walls of an enchanted city; here is the fortress of Emperors of which the popular stories of the Middle Ages tell, the San Kuo Chih and the Tung Chou Lieh Kuo. It is still there, as of old. See the turret high over the wall with square loopholes. By and by will appear warriors in red and gold, their steel bows bent, their long helmet plumes waving.

We are moving quite near to a wall which now recedes to the right, a never-ending wall, massive with projecting square bastions. On the left loom houses; I look across what appears to me to be a suburb. It seems more or less a garden city,

like all Chinese cities, with their great sheltering trees rising above the roof. The train rumbles on close to the wall. Peking, the capital, must be behind that wall, but it is impenetrable. Nothing can be seen. The gigantic grey rampart hides the Imperial City. But see, on the left is another large town. A suburb cannot be as large as that. What is that temple far away yonder, with its three dark blue cupolas, and its golden ball glittering in the sun? Low houses, more houses and yet more, and there beyond the cupola something rising into the sky, slender as a flower. It is a pagoda of seven stories, gracefully curved like a petal, poised delicately in the air.

Is that grim, grey wall never to end? Is this a town without limit? How hostile it seems, how exclusive, how it repels all foreign acquaintance! Is it a symbol of China's soul—primeval, massive, impenetrable, exalted, inaccessible? Why has this city, where the Son of Heaven sits enthroned, encircled her wisdom and beauty with this high, austere structure, that it may remain hidden from the world? And how comes this foreign steam-horse from the West to desecrate this seclusion with its rumblings and its foul fumes, disturbing the sacred silence of these immutable ramparts by the shrill screech of its whistle?

Now we draw near the station—carriage sheds, shunting engines, coal depôts—and the train slackens speed. An every-day station again. Who are those two dandified officers waiting on the platform and playing with their swords? How modern



ONE OF PEKING'S THREE STATIONS IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION.

To face p. 31.

are those grey uniforms with red facings. "The Imperial Chinese Guards," I hear somebody saying behind me. There are Europeans standing there, a few ladies and gentlemen, and farther on two British soldiers, Cameron Highlanders, in their kilts, bare-legged, and then, surely, two Prussian *See-Soldaten*. How anomalous!

The train stops. Chinese porters with "Hôtel des Wagons Lits" on their caps enter my compartment. I try to speak Chinese to them, but they do not understand me. Well then, pidgin-English will do: "You savee Hôtel des Wagons Lits? Me wantchee go there—you walkee with me!"

Leaving the station, we pass close to the high grey wall. A feeling of distress, almost of fear, overwhelms me. Now the mystery will reveal itself. It lies behind there: the subtle beauty of centuries is awaiting me.

A small gate, dark and grey, then a long, narrow subway traverses the broad ramparts. Chinese soldiers mount guard. It approaches.

But the dream ends with a shock. I see a wide European street in glaring light, with European houses; a canal in the middle and quite near a large white building with bamboo scaffolding in front, as if it were being repaired or enlarged—a common, vulgar, modern, European street, that's all.

The porter points to a flight of steps, beyond which is a large glass door.

The Grand Hôtel des Wagons Lits!

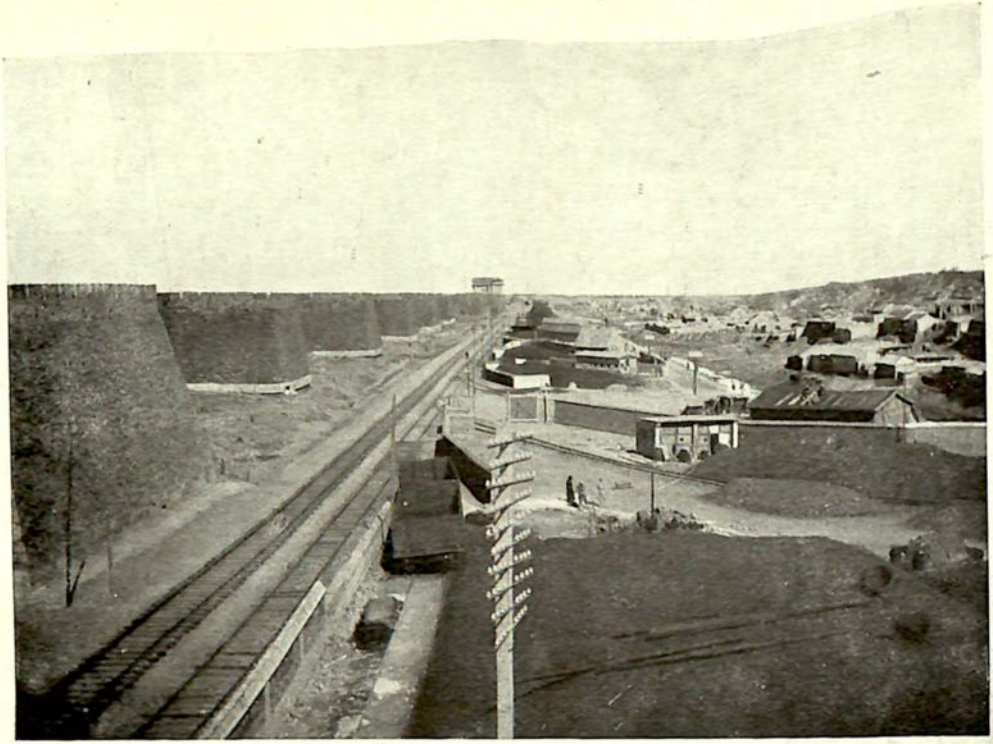
I find myself suddenly in the hall of a Parisian

hotel full of green wicker chairs and small tables and European ladies and gentlemen.

A spick and span young manager, just escaped from the Riviera Palace at Monte Carlo or the Royal Palace at Ostend, hurries up to me, bowing, and informs me that I am fortunate in being the first visitor to arrive by express from Tientsin, for there is only one room left, and that purely by accident; some one had left unexpectedly. The officers of the Dutch squadron, now lying off Ch'in-wang-tao arrived only yesterday; I notice a good many Dutch naval uniforms in the hall and hear Dutch spoken.

My room, in the passage on the right, is opened for me. My room in Peking—in old, old Peking, mysterious city of Emperors that are demi-gods! If only one did not see the street, where a number of rickshaws and their Chinese runners are stationed, one might think one was in a room of any European cosmopolitan hotel. A trim English bed with silk eiderdown, lace curtains, a large wardrobe with mirror, electric light bulbs, a lavatory with taps for hot and cold water, a little lamp with a red silk shade on a small table by the bed, a comfortable easy-chair—everything in the best modern style. Did I come to Peking for this? I could not help smiling somewhat bitterly. Have things already gone so far with Peking? I expected to reach to China's mysterious capital, and I find myself landed in a Parisian hotel.

In front of my windows I see the bamboo scaffolding of the workmen. Coolies with troughs



RAILWAYS AND TELEGRAPH LINES ACROSS PEKING'S OLD WALLS.

To face p. 33.

for mortar and bricks go to and fro—everywhere above me they knock and hammer. The porter tells me that they are adding a new story to the hotel. To me this knocking and hammering immediately after my arrival seems like a symbol, a symbol of the ugly, vulgar modernity that is invading Peking. Just now my steed of steam, fuming and screeching, rumbled through a hole of Peking's ramparts. Now they are hammering and pounding over my head, for the brand new cosmopolitan Grand Hôtel des Wagons Lits needs another story for the globe-trotters from America and the West who now overrun China because it has become the fashion; it already has a season, the autumn season.

I dress somehow and return to the hall, where by and by at one o'clock the gong will sound for tiffin. A glass of sherry, a cigarette, a French newspaper. Am I in Paris or Peking? Round about me nothing but "messieurs et mesdames," "Herren und Damen." Exactly the people one sees at Ostend, Biarritz, Wiesbaden, Cairo—English, American, German, French, Italian—something of everything. Types of smart business people and empty *désœuvrés*. What, in Heaven's name, are these people doing in Peking?

There goes the gong for tiffin.

A modern dining-room; just like the dining-room of every hotel except that the waiters here are Chinese boys in long, blue garments, who move about noiselessly in their felt slippers; their long, plaited pig-tails hang down their backs.

Happily, I secure a table for one in a corner, and sit looking at the bustling scene astonished, scarcely believing my eyes. There is a confusion of voices, a sibilant rustle of silken skirts; clear-cut women's faces beneath immense modern Parisian hats; gentlemen with buttonholes. The luncheon is excellent. The *consommé* is delicious, the *carpe bleu* is a choice savoury, the *pâté de bécassines* might have come from Paillard. It ought to put the epicure within me into the sweetest of tempers, considering how much I have enjoyed it at Ciro's and the Hermitage and Durand's, but in my heart I am furious. Everything is of the very first order, no doubt, but just like the over-smart manager in the hall, *tiré à quatre épingles*. But by the shade of Confucius, this is not Peking! A Tzigana band was only wanting to make the thing complete; and who knows, perhaps that may arrive!

A sort of dining-room superintendent tells me that I ought to try those pears. He stops for a moment at my table, while I am busy with my dessert. "They are the famous Peking pears. There are none in the world so juicy." And he is right. They are excellent, especially for a poor devil of a Dutchman, who has only just finished four years of Indian misery and not once tasted a pear. I willingly admit that the Peking pears are delightful. But I did not come here for pears; and somewhat peevishly I send the superintendent, or whatever he may be, about his business, poor fellow. Well, after luncheon back to the hall.

Arrival in Peking

The traditional small black coffee, here called "special," a "Henry Clay" and a liqueur—the typical life again of the days of yore, of Nice and Ostend. To-night smoking or evening dress, and again *carpe bleu* or something else *comme poisson*, and probably *faisan rôti* or *selle de chevreuil* and *daubes* and *bombes*, and once more a "special" and a Havana, and a different liqueur for a change, and so on for some months to come. Deuce take it! I am in Peking. Do I quite realise it? In Peking!

A handsome young American lady is sitting opposite me gently rocking herself in a rocking-chair, and the roses on her bosom, on stems far too long, wave gently up and down as she sways. A spruce Prussian subaltern, leaning with one arm against the banister of the wide staircase, strikes an attitude of subtle flirtation, and everywhere stylish ladies and gentlemen sit about, sipping coffee and liqueurs. "How do you like Peking?" I hear some one ask. "Oh, awfully nice"—the shrill, high voice of a lady—"so pretty; so interesting. Yesterday we did the Ming Tombs near Nank'ou; oh, it was lovely, lovely!"

Thus appears Peking to me, the holy city of the Emperors, the Sons of Heaven, tarnished by the snobbery of white globe-trotters and loafers, who have forced themselves by the fuming, screeching train through its sacred ramparts, which can no longer shield its virginity. And outside to the right and to the left, louder than the buzzing of voices, just overhead, I hear the hammering and

knocking going on for ever—as if the Modern had conquered, and were triumphantly erecting a new, vulgar, cosmopolitan town in the ancient holy fortress of the Tartars of the North.

THE LEGATION QUARTER

THE FOREIGN LEGATIONS.

CHAPTER II

THE LEGATION QUARTER

THIS is a square, the foreign Legation Quarter, and here it stands as a symbol of victory; but such an insipid, vulgar victory of modernity, featureless modern architecture, between the Chinese city, Wai Ch'êng (Outer City) and the Tartar City, Nei Ch'êng (Inner City).

When I went for my first stroll from the hotel in East Legation Street, I thought I must be in some European or American town, visited by Chinese. Large shops, photographers, furniture-dealers, piano-dealers, huge bank-buildings, the Hong-kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Deutsche-Asiatische Bank, the Yokohama Bullion Bank, a church—Église St. Michel—a guard-house in front of walls surrounding villas, clearly those of Legations, with foreign soldiers on guard—Japanese, French, Belgian, German. All this did not look very much like a town in China—like the capital of China.

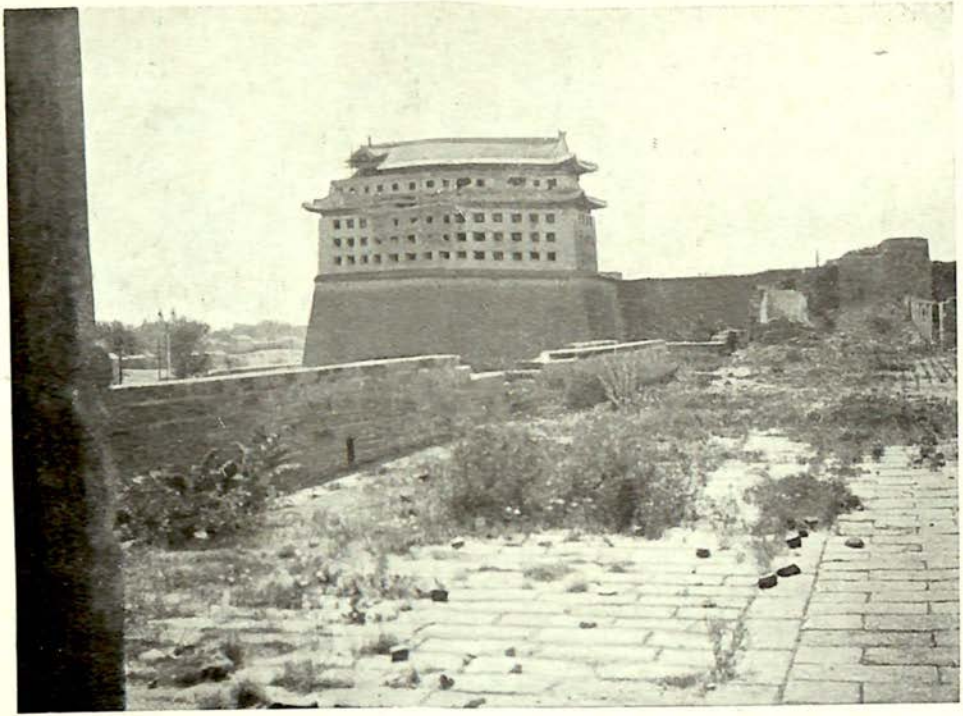
But my bewilderment became stronger still when, with my guide and with the plan of Peking in hand, I took my bearings, and, walking round

the entire Legation Quarter, it was revealed to me that properly speaking it is a fortress—a fortified stronghold with glacis and walls—in the very centre of the City of Emperors.

To the south its boundary is the huge menacing wall dividing the Tartar from the Chinese City. To the west, north, and east stands a glacis, hostile and warlike, behind which Western artillery and Western soldiers command an open field. Both to the east and the west there are, moreover, on the top of the Tartar rampart, blockhouses—one garrisoned by an American, the other by a German guard. Each Legation, again, is surrounded by a separate wall with sentries behind. At the side or the back of the embassy are the soldiers' barracks. The Legation Quarter stands in the middle of Peking, breathing violence on all sides from wall and glacis and guns.

During my first ramble I saw soldiers of many nationalities—small, smart Japanese, colonials of the French infantry, German marines, Scottish Camerons, nimble Italian sailors, stalwart American riflemen, Austrian colonials, and even Dutch marines. In the morning one may see troops with artillery at drill in the training field outside the walls of the Legation.

This foreign international stronghold in the centre of sacred Peking is even closed to Chinese traffic, and Chinese wagons or carts are not allowed to pass through it, unless on special business. The gates and entrances are guarded during the night —inside by European, outside by Chinese soldiers.



WATCH-TOWER ON THE SOUTH-EAST WALL.

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The Legation Quarter

Wherever one goes one finds oneself in the end pulled up by walls—walls—walls, and sentries with loaded rifles. Walls outside up to the Tartar and Chinese city, walls inside round the buildings of the Legations, along Legation Street. Everything secluded, separated, suspicious, hostile.

Within these walls, behind these walls, on all sides surrounded by walls, with soldiers and guns between them, one finds invisible, concealed, the European, American, and Japanese ambassadors. Yes, exactly as Putnam Weale [1] expressed it so typically in "The Re-shaping of the Far East," "Indiscreet Letters from Peking," &c., "in their Ghetto-like fortresses." No other word is so appropriate or defines the situation so correctly and concisely.

And round the Legation Quarter, separated again on all sides by a wide sweep of hostile walls, there live hundreds of thousands of Chinese and Tartars, unfamiliar and unknown to the white intruder, living their own mysterious lives, thinking their own mysterious thoughts, that entirely elude the inhabitants of the European Ghetto. They would scarcely live farther away from the Chinese national mind, these ambassadors, if they had established their Legations at the North Pole.

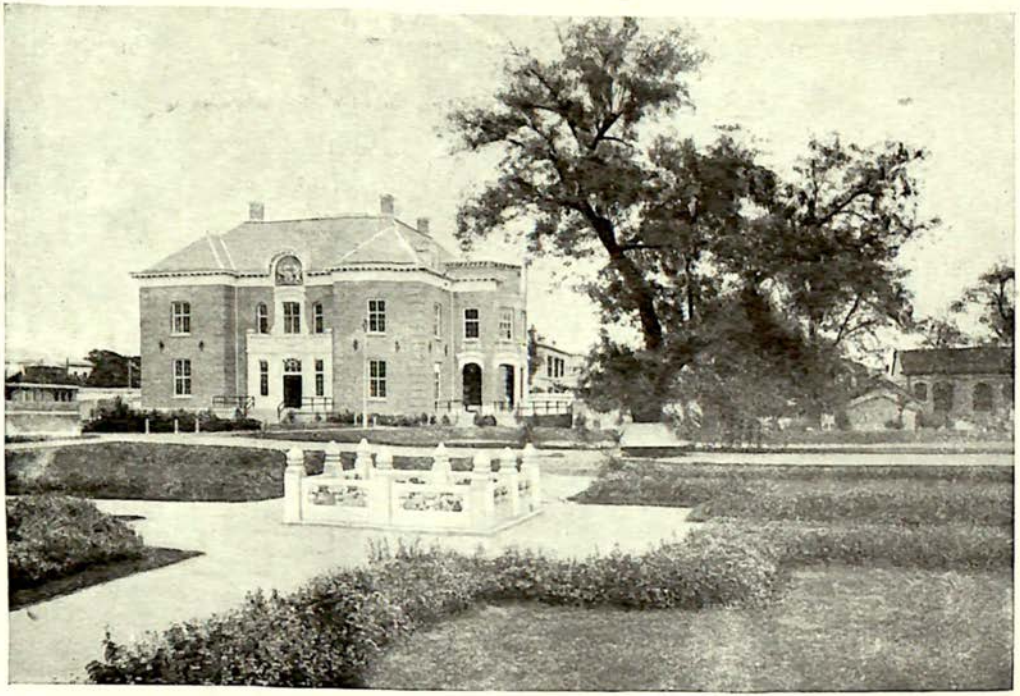
[1] B. L. Putnam Weale (penname of Bertram Lenox Simpson), "Indiscreet Letters from Peking. Being the Notes of an Eye-Witness, which set forth in some Detail, from Day to Day, the real Story of the Siege and Sack of a distressed Capital in 1900—the Year of great Tribulation." London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd. B. L. Putnam Weale, "The Re-shaping of the Far East." 2 vols., with illustrations and maps. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1905.

What I, as an artist, cannot forgive my white brethren is that they have made this European Ghetto in Peking so ugly and commonplace. Their modernity is so hideous compared with the antiquity that had to give way to it. Almost every Chinese cottage in Peking, even the smallest and poorest, has some beauty of line and colour, but nearly every European building in the Legation Quarter is a vulgarity. The entire *Gesandschafts-Viertel* is a wretched crowd of dull buildings trying to look fine, all scrolls and bays and trivialities, all in that vile conventional modern style which causes the new portions of all European capitals to look exactly like each other. A dull, crude, commonplace city of barbarians, shapeless, colourless, lacking in distinction, huddled in the midst of the exquisite old Chinese architecture which makes Peking a magnificent dream.

And consider that the entire city of the Legations was built by Chinese money, by the four hundred and fifty millions of taels the Chinese Government had to pay as compensation after the Boxer rising of 1900.

It was a Chinese mandarin who, with grim humour, replied to the assurance of a foreign diplomat that the city of the Legations was extremely interesting, "Yes, surely, extremely interesting; but not nearly so much so to you as to us who paid for it!"

If I were a Chauvinist (but my numerous travels have made my soul incurably cosmopolitan), I might feel something of patriotic and national



DUTCH EMBASSY IN PEKING.

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conceit and comfort in that, of all this commonplace, modern Legation Quarter the only building which shows character and distinction is the Dutch embassy.

A young Dutch architect-engineer, J. Robbers, has here constructed a building that certainly displays something of aristocratic simplicity. It has the stately distinction of the finest old mansions and castles of the Netherlands. It is solid yet characteristic, sumptuous yet sober, and has a genuine Dutch stamp.

The first day, I returned to the hall of the hotel at about 5 p.m., tired by my stroll through the Legation Quarter, and I noticed as soon as I entered the latest sample of modernity, *le dernier cri de Pékin*.

A pair of exalted ladies of Peking's *haute volée* were having tea from a European tea-service, with sweets and cakes. Their hair was dressed high and wide, after the national fashion, like a fan, with flowers and pearls; they wore the national wide mantles of glistening silk, their strange exotic faces were painted with bright red. A few years ago it would have been a shame, a descent to the status of prostitutes, if ladies of this position had shown themselves in public; but now the most Honourable the Marchioness of Chang and her Grace the Duchess of Ts'ai are having tea there, and perhaps—yes, look!—actually flirting and ogling in the Grand Hôtel des Wagons Lits. Ah! a spruce and smart young officer of the Imperial Guard is approaching them. He bows and salutes them in the military fashion.

It is perfect, the reform. Nothing is wanting. I chanced to sit down at a table where a European had already found a seat. He was evidently fond of a chat, and turned out to be a young English journalist on a Tientsin paper. He helped me a good deal in placing most of the guests in this Pekingese caravanserai des Wagons Lits. The season having now begun (it is early in October), the majority were tourists or globe-trotters, most of them from America. It has become fashionable to "do" Peking and the Ming Tombs. My journalist warned me, however, not to suppose that all of them were American millionaires, for even Peking does not enjoy that honour. There are far more simple people among them—teachers, chemists, grocers, yes, even blacksmiths and locksmiths, who have saved or made some money and are now staying most grandly in the expensive hotels. Afterwards they boast about their "doing" Peking in style.

The smaller number, quietly sipping their tea and munching biscuits, were business people, and mostly of the worst kind of concession-hunters who seize hold of loans, monopolies, claims, and whatever else there may be in that line.

Like birds of prey they descend on Peking, commit infamies to steal a march one upon the other; take advantage of the rottenness of Chinese administration by bribing mandarins in order to get introduced to ministers. They try to induce ambassadors to mingle politics with their own manœuvres, invite useful officials to dinner in a

private room of the hotel, cringe to them, and put gifts on their plates under the serviette.

The competition is fierce and furious, especially of the Germans with the Americans and English. The best intrigues are plotted, while mandarins seated between the parties, smiling vaguely and mysteriously, often stretch a hand underneath the table to each side. The journalist pointed out to me a couple of typical grant- and loan-hunters—fellows with something of the bird of prey in their eye and a hard, resolute expression round the clean-shaven mouth. I do not know which I detest most, the rapacious grant-hunters or the trivial tourist, the first preying upon China's riches, the others upon her beauty.

At the entrance of the hall there is posted a warning, issued by an International Committee of Peking's diplomats and bankers, enumerating vandalisms and barbarities committed by tourists on the monuments of China. Heads and arms are cut off statues, names scratched and carved upon marble monuments, bas-reliefs wantonly damaged. The Committee request that any further offences may be notified to them at once. It does not satisfy these tourists to make China unsafe by their empty arrogance, their insolent pretensions; they must destroy her great works of art, and carve their insignificant names on the virgin marble of sacred sepulchres and temples.

On that first day I had not yet got over my amazement and disappointment, and with scarcely restrained wrath and vexation I looked on at these

fidgety globe-trotters and grant-hunters, and these painted, modern Manchu marchionesses, sipping tea and munching biscuits.

The journalist smilingly handed me an English newspaper, just issued. "You speak of reforms," he said. "Just read this and you can no longer doubt the surprising progress made in this country." And I read, full of astonishment and admiration :—

"The 2nd of October was one of the most important dates in modern Chinese history. Yesterday the Chinese railway from Peking to Kalgan, via Nank'ou, was opened with great ceremony. It has been built without the assistance of foreigners or foreign capital; built exclusively with Chinese money and by Chinese engineers and workmen. The line runs across a very mountainous and rocky country full of the greatest technical difficulties, which have been most brilliantly surmounted. All the Chinese engineers who assisted at the work were graduates of English or American universities. The principal engineer was the Taotai Yeme T'ien Yao, Ph.B. (Yale) and A.M.C.E. (London).

"Immense tunnels have been bored, 1,204, 150, 463, and 5,080 feet long; cuttings made into rocks 90 feet deep; bridges built from 100 to 400 feet in length.

"All the foreign ambassadors, consuls, and merchants were invited to attend the inauguration. The speech of the minister Hsü Shih-chung (of the Postal Department, the Yu Ch'uan Pu) echoed

in the imagination like chimes ringing in a great future.

" 'At the present moment the uppermost sentiment in the heart of each Chinese is one of triumph at the victory of modern science, proved by the Peking-Kalgan Line. Notwithstanding the natural difficulties of the track that had to be overcome, the cost of this line is less than that of any other railway in China.

" 'This is the century of speed. The steam horse enters China. The patient beasts of burden wearily walking across the passes with their weighty loads of wares must now surrender to the new-comer.

" 'Not long ago our nation was up in arms against the introduction of the railway; but now, influenced by the modern system of education, it welcomes it as the herald of a new and glorious period. The day is not far off when China will see her twenty-one provinces and dominions connected by a network of steel which will draw her people together into full unity, by removing the differences in dialects and habits, by making possible the exchange of all the commodities of life, and by promoting friendly relations with other peoples. Whenever that day dawns it will be the greatest day in China's history. And we shall live to see it arise.' "

These few words explain more than could long treatises on the possibilities or impossibilities of reform in China, for they were officially uttered in public by a Chinese minister.

I went on reading and was rejoicing at the

promise of the future when I came across the noble reply of the British ambassador, Sir John Jordan :—

"Ten years ago no one believed in the possibility of a rapid advance of railways in China, but public opinion has suddenly changed all this. Prejudices are now things of the past, and there are indications that in times not remote we shall see in China an immense net of railways promoting trade and benefiting the whole country. Probably China will, in coming years, give lessons even to America, since it possesses railway engineers of the type of Yeme T'ien Yao."

Would it be true after all? Would this grand idea hovering over the Empire, this anticipation of higher forms of thought, materialise in grand deeds? Would a people of four hundred and thirty millions, my brethren, though of different race, united by a universal language, the Mandarin-Chinese, awaken to loftier consciousness? Would the soul of this nation come into touch with that of others? Would this nation with its lofty philosophy (the philosophy of which Lao Tzŭ and Confucius and Chuang Tzŭ once were the incarnation), with its wonderful literature, with that fine and delicate artistic sense which has produced such ethereal porcelain, such superb bronzes, such exquisite tissues—would this nation, until now surrounded by a wall of seclusion and inaccessible pride, give to these other worlds and absorb from them all that has been revealed to humanity by the divine spirit in divine thought?

How will the world's aspect be changed when the

MANCHU LADIES.

thoughts of four hundred millions of Easterns come floating into the mental sphere of Europe and America? How many prejudices will be broken up by that conflux? How much new wisdom, how much new beauty, will be born from the commingling of what is essential in both?

After all, I am not so very strongly impressed by these railways and trade interests, these loans and grants of which the newspapers are full: they are merely external means, they are not the goal. The resounding words of minister Hsü, the speech of the British Ambassador, open wider horizons for me. Behind these boasted trains, behind all this modern machinery, I perceive the dawn of a universal interchange of ideas, I see new conceptions stretching out their open arms from West to East, reinvigorating the mental atmosphere of mankind by the beat of their wings. What I observe here in this cosmopolitan hotel, the preying grant-hunters, the snobbish globe-trotters and loafers, the flirting Manchu ladies sipping tea — all this is merely annoying and ridiculous. It is the inevitable result of this first period of transition from the primeval to the modern, but it is only external and ephemeral; it is not the inner spirit of reform.

Suddenly I seemed to know this for a truth, and my pain and wrath disappeared. Smiling, I lit a cigarette, and I was not at all astonished and not even irritated when my new journalistic acquaintance asked, "Wouldn't you like to come with me to the circus to-night?"

"A circus—in Peking?"

"Yes, certainly, the Circus Barowsky. And what is more, with a ballet, an excellent ballet. Or would you prefer to go to the Arcade? There are new films to-night and two English variety artistes. If you like we can afterwards gamble a little at roulette. There are three banks in Telegraph Lane where they play fair. And . . . ahem! . . . There is also something else if you should be interested in that. . . . We are quite up to date with our civilisation in Peking. . . . You understand what I mean? . . ."

Then I began to understand. Ah! . . . Even that in Peking—"*Les petites femmes?* . . ."

"That's it!" my journalist answers coolly. "There you are . . . and first-rate too . . . French, Russian, American . . . Only somewhat expensive. . . ." A *train-de-luxe*, an *hôtel-de-luxe*, a circus with a ballet, a music-hall with song-and-dance girls, gaming-rooms, expensive *petites femmes* . . . everything is complete!

But I bravely cling to that other certainty of a moment ago—the coming inward greatness, and am no longer disturbed by these smaller outward things. So I answer merrily: "I prefer the circus . . . I'll ask the hotel-office to book two seats."

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

STREET LEADING TO THE IMPERIAL AND THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

To face p. 53.

CHAPTER III

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

I WAS sorely mistaken when on going through the great wall of Peking for the first time I thought that behind it was Peking and that merely a suburb lay on the left. For I did not pass along the side of Peking, but right through it, between the Chinese city Wai Ch'êng and the Tartar city Nei Ch'êng. It was no suburb on my left, but the Chinese City which farther on, towards the south, was also walled in by tremendous ramparts. Peking is not one single town, but three, concentrically situated one within another, each surrounded by a grey, grim wall. In front lies the Chinese City, which is considered to be "in the country," outside Peking proper. It took me a week to understand what an immense, primeval city Peking is, unique in the whole world, a city of concentric towns with a forbidden central circle, like the sacred cities in some of the kingdoms of the submerged Atlantis described in occult tradition.

Entering from the south, an enormous outer gate rises up in the grey desert; a tunnel gateway leads towards an immense avenue with a temple on either

side, again surrounded by a wall—or rather there is a collection of temples, an endless temple-park. On the left is the Temple of Agriculture—Hsien Nung T'an; on the right the most beautiful temple in the world, the Temple of Heaven—T'ien T'an. Along a bow-shaped marble bridge, formerly called the Beggar's Bridge, the pilgrim to the Imperial City enters the large Chinese or Outer City (Wai Ch'êng), where the same avenue is continued as a long wide boulevard, the Yung-ting Mên; then as the Ch'ien Mên street, also called Emperor Street, a gigantic gate—the Chêng-Yang Mên (Gate of the Right Front)[1] gives admittance through a grim high wall, separating the Chinese City from the Tartar City. This Chêng-Yang Mên, colloquially called Ch'ien Mên (Front Gate), a structure which seems to have been made by gods or giants, is really a collection of four gates which, with a circular wall, enclose a large court. Pedestrians and carriages from north to south have to pass through the Eastern, and those travelling from south to north through the Western Gate, a circuitous way; but the emperor goes straight on from north to south and vice versa, and for him alone is the Middle Gate opened. These gates in the broad solid wall are more like tunnels; one's footfall sounds hollow; the rumble of the carriages is dull. They are guarded by military police with loaded rifles.

Once through the Ch'ien Mên the visitor sees

[1] Yang is the male, active element in the cosmos, Yin the passive female. Its meaning here is "front towards the south."

SECOND GATE LEADING INTO THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

To face p. 55.

before him a wide square. From this broad avenue, guarded and inaccessible, leads a closed gate, the Wu Mên, the entrance to the Holy of Holies—the inaccessible, Forbidden City (Chin Ch'êng) or Violet City (Tzŭ Ch'êng), where dwells the Son of Heaven.

This Holy of Holies, this heart of hearts, the Forbidden City, lies behind a wonderful red rampart with golden yellow tiles, within the third City the Huang Ch'êng, that is, the Yellow or Imperial City.

The entire plan of Peking centres in this mysterious City of Cities, hidden itself, but the starting-point and the destination of all roads.

Only after passing through three dark gates at the end of three interminable avenues, traversing three cities, the pilgrim, if he gained admission, reached at last the road towards the Sacred Emperor.

One must have seen the grim, grey walls of Peking, must have passed through the cavernous, dark, tunnel-like gateways, must have walked along the endless avenues, to obtain some notion of the awe and reverence that must have taken hold of pilgrim or ambassador on his way to the emperor.

It was to meet not an ordinary mortal that this solemn journey was made, but a divine being. And the entire design of Peking is calculated to enclose worthily, to lodge safely and inaccessibly, that sacred human being whose father is Heaven. Properly speaking, Peking is all one immense

temple, surrounding the recess which is the Forbidden City, wherein dwells the Deity who is Emperor.

Whereas the three outer walls of the Chinese, the Tartar, and the Imperial City are sombre and dark, striking one with dread and terror, the wall of the Forbidden City, far from being warlike, is a delicate pink, like the rosy hue of blossoms, and is covered with bright tiles of a golden yellow colour, shining brilliantly in the sun. All buildings in the Forbidden City are covered with these gold-coloured tiles, that here and there, seen from afar in perspective, rise above the walls, and on each corner of the wall there is a magnificent pavilion also covered with golden tiles. This pink wall and the glittering golden tiles impress one like something in a fairy story. In the clear, pellucid sunlight, under the cloudless sky of Peking, stands this Forbidden City, glimmering like some legendary city of enchantment.

It is mysterious in the fullest sense. No one lives there but the emperor and imperial ladies and dowagers and eunuchs. Even the Prince Regent lives without the Forbidden City, entering it only during the daytime for the transaction of State affairs. Ministers and Councillors of State of the highest rank are only admitted by special authorisation.

Behind that pink and golden wall, in the fairy-like palaces of which here and there only a gleaming roof is seen flaming against the deep blue sky, there dwell the mythological little Emperor Hsüan

T'ung, and the Dowager-Empress of the sympathetic dreamy Emperor Kuang Hsü, and the dowagers of the Emperor T'ung Chih—an entire imperial family of semi-sacred descent.

The inner life of the highest rulers of China, the real, intimate life of the Empire, with its beating heart and its secret brain, remain concealed within the Forbidden City, inaccessibly secluded behind those charmed walls: nothing of it reaches the outside world.

A special guard protects the gates with loaded rifles and dares not admit any one, under penalty of death, without the Imperial seal on a special permit; no one enters or leaves except under special conditions, and there is not the slightest chance of creeping in secretly or of bribing the guard. The Forbidden City is impenetrable, and there is enthroned the Manchu dynasty; inaccessible, secure, with its inmost life and thoughts, from the foreign ambassadors and the foreign press.

The Chinese Government in the Forbidden City behind strong walls, closely guarded; the European, American, and Japanese ambassadors behind high walls in their Legation forts, protected by military—what a distance, what a seclusion! how impossible has all intimate intercourse been made!

There is something sublime in this isolation, in this seclusion, this inaccessible solitude of China's rulers within the Forbidden City.

Each time that I was stopped on my long tramps through Peking by the pink wall with the yellow

tiles, and dare not go on, I felt, instead of something hostile, something resembling mute sympathy, almost kinship.

After all, has not every human being in the depths of his soul such a Forbidden City, behind which there lives, concealed, his inmost Self?

Outside the people move about and foreigners dwell; outside, loud traffic roars and a noisy multitude revel; outside, love and friendship sometimes venture to knit us a temporary bond with some kindred prince or queen from another kingdom; but yet how illusory is all this outward activity. Behind the walls of the Forbidden City, ever haughty and unapproachable, remains the solitary emperor whom no one knows, who never surrendered his individuality to any one, and never will.

THE STREETS OF PEKING

P'AI-LOU,

To face p. 61,

CHAPTER IV

THE STREETS OF PEKING

THE great surprise of Peking for the foreigner is its long, wide streets, wider than many a Parisian boulevard. The vista is outlined more clearly by magnificent, stately *p'ai-lous*[1]—arches in three stories of marble or painted wood—rising up here and there in the middle of the street. Sometimes the avenue is terminated by a high watch-tower.

The street generally used by Europeans is the well known Ha-ta Mên Street, which leads in a northern direction from the gate Ha-ta at the beginning of Legation Street into the Tartar City. One should not think of these streets as if they were at all like those of London or Paris; especially are they unlike those of clumsy, monotonous houses in new suburbs. The Chinese houses are unlike each other, very rarely are two adjacent ones similar; most of them are old and decayed, but what splendour of colour, what outlines! The carving of the doors, the posts, the window-frames, the roof-work, is fine and sometimes as delicate

[1] *P'ai-lou* = tablet arch. A tablet with inscription is placed in the front above each *p'ai-lou*.

as lace. The roofs—one notices this particularly when looking from the top of a wall—are very slender, in the form of tents, a remembrance and relic of nomadic times. They look like barges, slowly floating through the sky; the signs and shop-posts flame in gold on black or red, and all the houses are painted in harmonious colours. If one looks down from a wall or the top of a watch-tower on Peking, one beholds the rosy walls of the Forbidden City with its brilliant yellow tiles and everywhere the green and blue *p'ai-lous* and pavilions of gold and red and blue, roofs of red and brown, white pagodas, grey towers painted in dull colours, with borders of old-gold; and all these colours seem to sing in the light. Yes, that is the right word, Peking is a town singing in colour.

And in these streets, lined by old, gaily-coloured houses, here and there between them a new one after quite a modern model, there is a teeming crowd of pedestrians and horses and mules and donkeys, a continuous file of riders and carriages, sometimes three or seven solemn camels, a small caravan.

Nearly all the Chinese here still wear, thank goodness! the beautiful national costume, that is to say, a long vestment from neck to foot, with wide sleeves, and over it a short sleeveless waist-coat. The head is either bare and adorned with the pigtail, or surmounted by a small round black cap, with a button in the centre. The middle classes and the well-to-do have these long garments

P'AI-LOU IN THE TARTAR CITY.

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of dark blue and the waistcoat of brilliant green silk, or the one bronze brown red, the other violet; or again, brown with deep yellow; and they all are a magnificent sight in the streets. Moreover, all Chinese above the lowest class of coolies walk in a very stately manner and their gestures are refined and graceful. Look only at the way in which two Chinese salute each other in the street. How the one bows to his host upon leaving his house and how the host returns the bow! Splendid are their yet restrained and simple gestures, revealing the unconscious artist in nearly every Chinese. This quiet, stately walk and these graceful gestures are signs of inner culture that hold good promise for the future.

A few years ago the mandarins, discarding the sedan-chair, began to use modern carriages with glass windows, and glass front and back, instead of wood. It is a sort of small glass brougham.

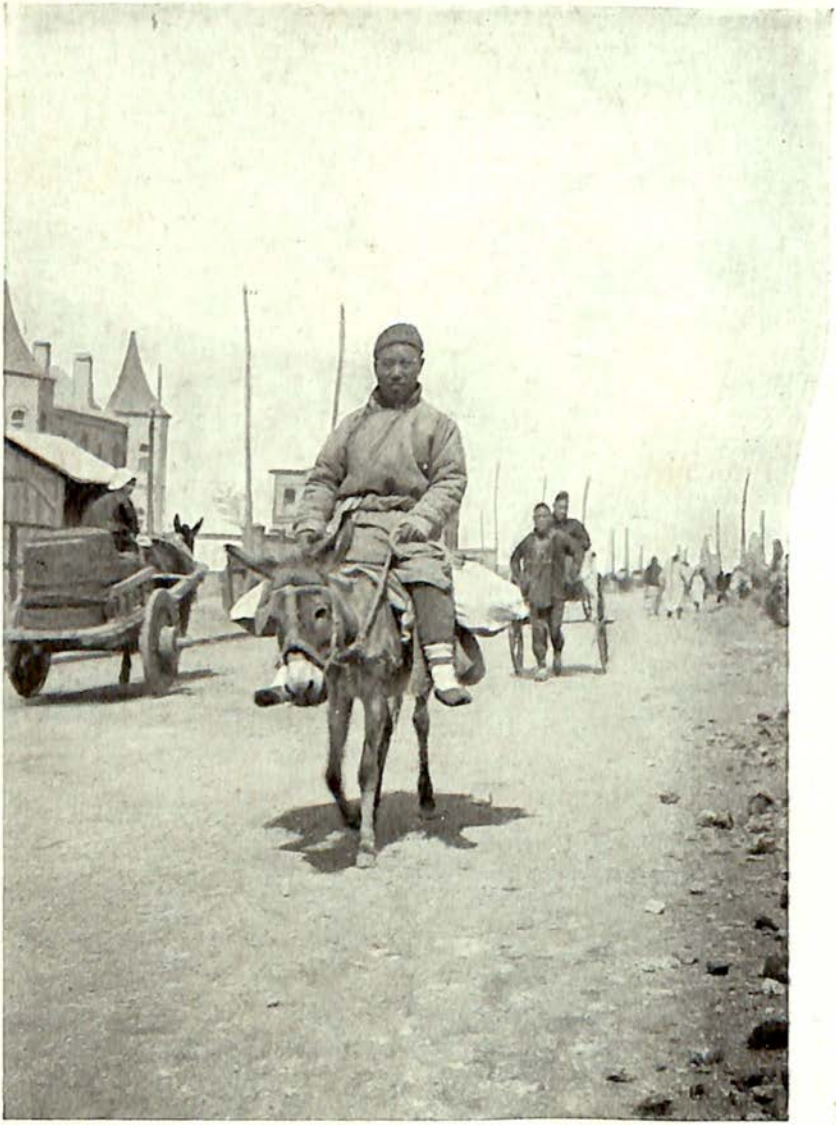
Do not think for a moment that a mandarin of any standing at all would deign to drive about in such a glass carriage with only his coachman. He always takes with him (and so do his wife and children) a mounted escort—the number according to rank. Every moment one meets such a small procession. In the carriage is seated the mandarin, very solemn and immovable-looking in his official dress. Before and behind are escorts of cavaliers in long riding garments, wearing the official round hat, with drooping red feathers, sitting splendidly straight in the saddle. They are born riders, these Chinese: they are like statues on horseback. Mules

and donkeys are also much used. There is an endless variety of mules here. There are such complicated crosses of horses and donkey, such big, horse-like mules and such mule-like horses, that one must be quite an expert to define the breed.

A special Pekingese and North-Chinese vehicle is a little wheeled, tilted cart, drawn by a small mule or a large donkey, the wagon as a rule painted brownish-yellow, the tilt indigo-blue. There are no seats in it, the passenger sits cross-legged on the floor; nor is there a box, the driver sitting somewhere, somehow, his feet dangling. There is a small window in each side of the hood. Sometimes an entire family succeed in huddling together in such a little cart, and drive about in homely and cosy fashion with the inevitable teapot.

Another vehicle, also unseen in South China, is a barrow on one wheel, pushed by one man; on both sides—on protruding boards—are persons or goods.

Amongst all these carriages and carts and horsemen, hundreds of coolies rush to and fro their rickshaws—here called *yang ch'ê* (foreign cart)—miserable, nearly collapsed carcasses of two-wheeled little carts, with dirty, filthy cushions. Driving in such a miserable rickshaw is a torture because of the bumping and pitching. Happily, one can order better rickshaws at the hotel if one is prepared to pay a little more. These have rubber tyres and better-mannered coolies, and in these it is comfortable and cool to drive. The rickshaw coolie is the only impudent and rude element in Peking.



A DONKEY AND ITS RIDER.

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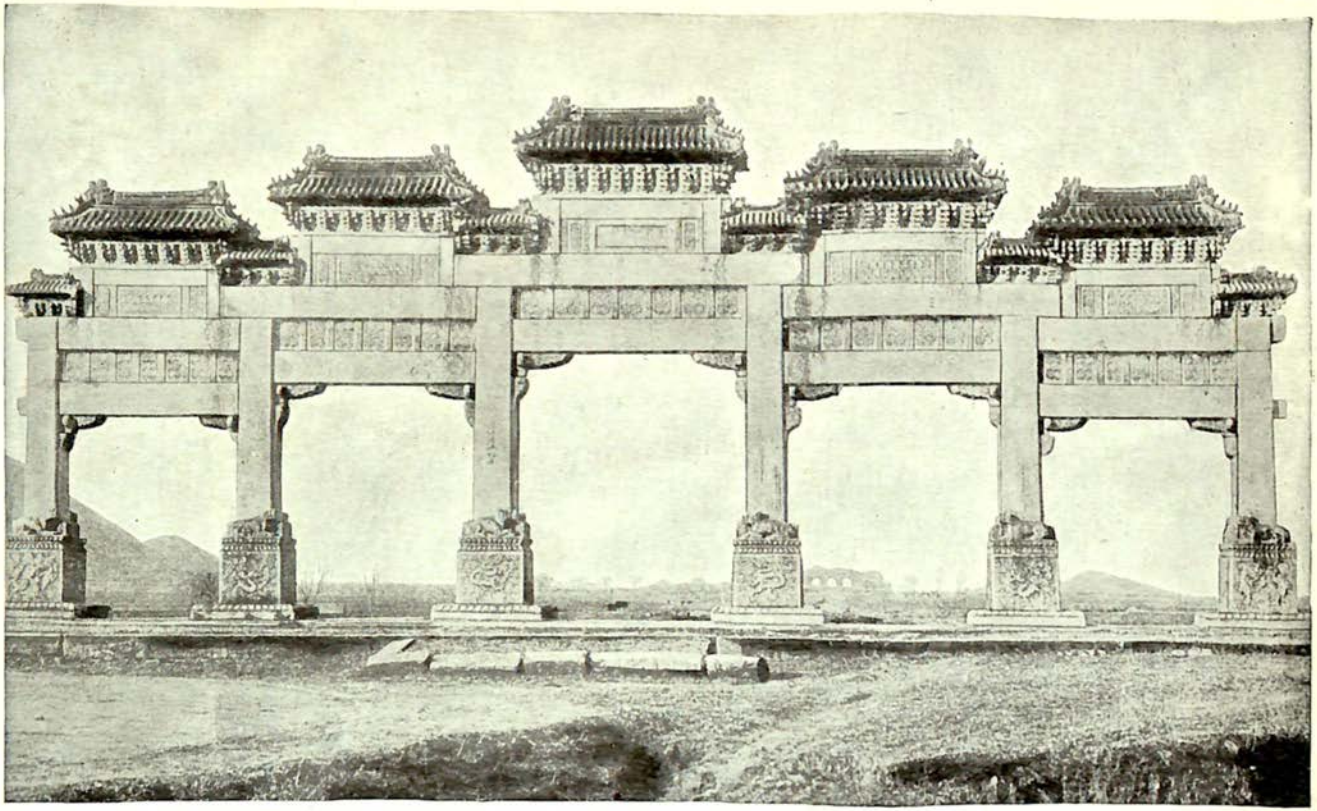
What strikes one most in such a Chinese street is that all who are not coolies show such calmness and are so quiet, not only when walking, as I have remarked already, but also when sitting. Even a man riding the poorest little donkey, or a person occupying the most miserable of rickshaws, displays a certain amount of stateliness. I could not help laughing now and then when I saw seated on a wretched, meek little donkey, a stout Chinaman, with the air of an emperor on his steed of ceremony. But the Chinese themselves do not laugh at all on that account, they consider it quite proper. Once I noticed in the Ta-Sha Lärl Street, one of the most crowded of the Chinese City, such a dense cluster of carriages, donkey-carts, and rickshaws that the traffic was obstructed and a couple of policemen did not know how to remove the block. The vehicles could move neither forward nor backward. The drivers and rickshaw coolies yelled and swore, the donkeys tried to bite each other, the mules began to kick—in short, it was a tremendous hubbub that I saw from a picture-dealer's shop. But do not think that the personages in these carriages or carts or rickshaws also began to yell or became nervous, or anything of that kind. They sat calmly, solemnly, in the same quiet attitude, too deeply concentrated on their own dignity to be affected by the vulgar noise around them.

In the street the Chinese are the most orderly and proper people in the world. They do not push, they politely step on one side for each other.

They do not laugh at one another. Women now walk in the streets much more than was customary, but I never heard any Chinese say an indecent word to a woman or saw one make an indecent gesture; nor did I notice one single prostitute ogling or addressing a man. There is not in the whole of Peking, not even in the meanest neighbourhood, a street-boy who would throw mud or jeer at a foreigner, as may happen in some European capitals. Once I saw something remarkable in the crowded Ch'ien Mên Street. A blind man without any guide, a poor old wretch, wanted to cross the street, merely feeling his way over the ground with a long staff. I gasped, expecting that he would be run over in the mass of horsemen and carriages, but all kept out of his way or stopped entirely, and he got safely to the other side.

I, a foreigner, visited quite alone neighbourhoods where tourists never come on foot and very rarely in rickshaws. I walked across markets and bazaars and attended theatres — the only European present. But, as I have said, I have yet to hear the first insulting word, although there is a very strong movement against everything European. I visited the shops of all the dealers in antiquities, and was allowed to finger and examine all possible objects for hours at a stretch, without making the merchants impatient. Moreover, they were polite enough to offer me tea, and were equally civil when I left without having bought anything. One is perfectly safe in Peking if he does not



P'AI-LOU NEAR THE MING TOMBS.

make himself unpleasant—by beating a rickshaw coolie, for example—but knows how to behave. One is not laughed at, is not considered "silly" on account of a difference in dress; he is not hooted or pelted with mud, the passers-by keep their thoughts about him to themselves, even if they are not exactly favourable.

In the neighbourhood of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Wai-wu Pu (formerly called Tsung-li Yamên), the European is struck by an immense Arch of Honour, *p'ai-lou*, of white marble, standing in the middle of the Ha-ta Mên Street. It was erected by the Chinese Government, at the instance of the German Emperor, in commemoration of the German Ambassador, Freiherr von Ketteler, treacherously killed on that spot by a Manchu sergeant on June 20, 1900, and also as lasting evidence of the Emperor's anger at this crime, as a warning to all.

On that day the German Ambassador went to the Wai-wu Pu, like a hero, without any escort and accompanied only by one secretary, although he might have suspected that danger was threatening, for on the previous day the ambassadors had received notice from the then Chinese Government to leave Peking within twenty-four hours with all Europeans. However incredible it may appear, the ambassadors were so much in doubt that they actually decided to obey, notwithstanding warnings from well-informed quarters to the contrary, and in some of the Legations they had already begun to remove their belongings. If the German Ambas-

sador had not gone to the Wai-wu Pu and been killed there the other ambassadors would not have known what to expect; all Europeans would have left the Legation Quarter on their way to Tientsin —although even the railway connection with that town was broken off — and would have been slaughtered like cattle to the last man, woman, and child. So von Ketteler's death was instrumental in saving the other Europeans.

If one like myself hears from eye-witnesses stories about this terrible Boxer period of 1900, or even if one reads reliable books about it by people who went through the siege of the Legations (as, for instance, Martin's "Siege in Peking," or especially Putnam Weale's "Indiscreet Letters from Peking"), he is amazed that the European Legations at that time knew so little of what was going on in their immediate neighbourhood, in and about the city. The English Ambassador had even sent his wife and children to a summer residence in the mountains outside Peking, unconscious of the threatening peril. Had they not been saved accidentally they would certainly have been surprised by the Boxers. The ambassadors knew nothing; it was Bishop Favier of the French Cathedral Pei-T'ang who warned them that they were in imminent danger. According to reliable information none of the ambassadors knew what to do even after Favier's warning, for they did not even then realise what was going on. To understand how such ignorance became possible one must have been in Peking, with its walls, walls,

THE SMALL WATER-GATE, HSIAO-SHUI-MÊN.

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walls, everywhere, with its Forbidden City inaccessible. Ambassadors who in consequence of their high office do not come into touch with the people, and only now and then have official intercourse with the high mandarins, might in 1900 be entirely uninformed even about such a striking movement as that of the Boxers, which was not kept secret at all.

When the first shots were fired and the danger was at the portals, it was not an ambassador, or any other European official, but Dr. Morrison, a journalist and correspondent of the *Times*, who by his energy rescued a couple of thousand Chinese Christians and brought them to a palace within the circle of defence, thus saving their lives. In reading one of the books referred to above one gets a vivid idea of the position here during that dreadful summer of 1900.

It must afford the German Emperor great satisfaction that the Ketteler monument, imposing, gorgeous in the stately Chinese style, was erected on the spot in Ha-ta Mên Street where thousands and thousands pass daily underneath its arches.

Besides the wide avenues the most striking objects in Peking are the huge ramparts and watch-towers, recalling remote primeval centuries, cities like Babylon or Jericho.

The great wall separating the Tartar City from the Chinese City, which has become the promenade for Europeans, measures fourteen miles in length, forty-one feet in height, is sixty-two feet wide at the base and fifty on the top. It provides a

splendid view of Peking and of the mountains in the west. The Chinese City alone has ten large watch-gates, the finest being the Ch'ien Mên, looking towards the Imperial City; from thence a wide avenue runs straight to the Ta Ch'ing Mên, along which the Emperor only is allowed to pass, and which leads straight to the Forbidden City. I must remind the reader that the Tartar City has nine gates in its ramparts, and possesses, also surrounded by a high wall, an inner section, the Imperial City, and this Imperial City also has an inner section, the Forbidden City. The Imperial City and the Forbidden City have four watch-gates each.

All these gates are thoroughly mediæval, their stout iron portals are guarded by soldiers armed with rifles. In the evening at dusk all these gates are closed except the Ch'ien Mên, connecting the Chinese and Tartar Cities, and then Peking is cut off from the outer world until the next morning. One small gate, however, is left open during the night, the small water-gate Hsiao-shui Mên, giving admission from the Legation Quarter to the station of the Tientsin Railway. But only Europeans are allowed to pass through it in the evening and during the night; Chinese cannot pass without a special permit.

Behind each watch-gate there is a walled semi-circular courtyard. Walking through one of these tunnel-gates, from sixty to sixty-five feet long, between grey weather-beaten walls, gives one the sensation of being in an immemorial city far back

PAVILION ON THE CH'IEN MÊN GATE.

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in the centuries. A somewhat mediæval adventure happened to a couple of Americans who stayed with me at the Hôtel des Wagons Lits, and who afterwards related it to me. They had gone to the Summer Palace outside Peking and were late, in consequence of snapshotting and making notes. When they arrived in their carriage at the Western Gate, Hsi-chih Mên, after sunset, they found it closed and they were refused admission by the armed guards. Neither threats that their ambassador would institute proceedings nor attempts to bribe were of any use. Peking was closed. At another gate they might not meet with any more success. The grey, grim walls were closed, and closed they would remain until sunrise. In a wretched, miserable Chinese inn of the outer suburb the wealthy American tourists passed a miserable night, and this quite near a town with telegraphs, telephones, express trains, luxurious hotels, a circus, a music-hall, roulette-tables, and *petites femmes*.

It is exactly the sharp contrast between modern and antique, between refined comfort and primitive want, that makes life in Peking so unreal that sometimes it seems to be a dream.

Within the walls of an Embassy or in the Hôtel des Wagons Lits everything is misleadingly European; all the arrangements are modern and Western. When lunching once in the X legation I asked the X Ambassador the usual question, "Do you feel tolerably at home in Peking? Do not things strike you here as unusual?" This diplomat

happened to have arrived only a few months ago. "Oh, not at all unusual," was the answer, which might have been less honest and more diplomatic. "We feel as much at home here as in Europe; we have our European friends and acquaintances . . . we hardly see anything of the Chinese at all . . . if we had no Chinese servants we might quite well fancy ourselves in Europe."

This reply is typical of the entire foreign diplomatic circles in Peking. In the Ghetto-like fortresses, as Putnam Weale happily calls them, although with some exaggeration, the Western diplomats live their own Western lives. There is an interminable interchange between the various Embassies of dinners and tiffins and picnics. They have tea and tennis, and indulge in some flirtation, but next to nothing is perceived in the foreign legations of what is felt and thought and planned behind the roseate walls of the Forbidden City. And the carefully penned messages, dispatches and other official documents from the Chinese Government and diplomatists, to the Western ambassadors—well, any instructed sinologue knows quite well that they are a fair form, concealing more than is displayed. An ambassador who fancies that he is acquainted with the plans and intentions of the Chinese authorities from the official correspondence—in most cases read in translation if he does not know the Chinese language himself—is, although he is not aware of it, quite at sea, without any compass or steering gear. This incredible isolation of the European

diplomatists, and this ingeniously maintained inaccessible aloofness of Chinese authorities and the Chinese Government, have caused catastrophes like that of the Boxer insurrection of 1900. Each time that such a catastrophe occurred, putting an end to all the guessing and conjecturing and all official correspondence, the foreign diplomacy was at sea, tossed hither and thither by the waves.

I have already referred to Putnam Weale's remarkable book " Indiscreet Letters from Peking," which describes the incredible confusion and vacillation in 1900.

During my stay in Peking I wrote to the Amsterdam paper *De Telegraaf:* " Hence great, important decisions and events will in the near future crash down upon us unexpectedly like so many thunder-claps, for no one knows what is really happening at present. Each day may bring fresh surprises."

In the same letter I wrote of the sudden and unexpected dismissal of Tuan Fang, the Viceroy of Pei Chihli: " Such things fall from the skies in China; but long beforehand they have been discussed and settled in this mysterious Forbidden City, behind the walls through which no European will ever penetrate. One lives quite near it, one walks along its walls, but no one knows what is thought and planned behind them."

And how fully have these prophecies been justified! While writing this chapter I see in the papers a telegram reporting that quite suddenly an army of 2,500 modern Chinese troops, quietly mobilised

in the province of Ssüch'uan, has entered Thibet, to depose the Dalai Lama at Lhassa. Is not this another striking example of what I said just now? How long has there not been mischief brewing in Thibet? How often did not the papers write about the coquetting of the Dalai Lama with Russia, and the complications that this might produce for China and England with regard to India? It threatened to become a dangerous business, a hornet's nest for the Russian, British, and Chinese diplomats.

But suddenly the crash came, as I had prophesied. China cut the knot. Before any foreign diplomat was able to warn his Government, before one foreign journalist in Peking could caution his paper, before the smallest item of news had oozed through the red walls of the Forbidden City, China mobilises modern troops in Ssŭch'uan and marches on Lhassa, thereby bringing the Powers, without any negotiations or correspondence, face to face with an accomplished fact.

I mention this simply as proof of my contention that the secret motives and intimate plans of the Chinese Government remained a closed book to foreign diplomacy, thanks to its isolation by guards and ramparts. And I am fully convinced that other thunder-claps of the same description will follow without Europe having noticed any cloud, however small, in the Chinese sky. Nothing will astonish me, for I am prepared for anything.

But I have wandered far from my speculations on the contrast between ancient and modern in Peking.

The Streets of Peking

Something extremely strange to me was my first visit to the big "Circus Barowsky," at the entrance to Ha-ta Mên Street. This Circus Barowsky is but too well known in the Far East through the calamity of Port Arthur in 1903; for was it not found that when the Japanese torpedo-boats unexpectedly attacked the Russian battleships in the haven of Port Arthur, before the declaration of war, the majority of the Russian naval officers, instead of being on duty behind the barbettes, were gazing at the ballet-girls in the Circus Barowsky?

It was hardly conceivable to me—that huge, Russian circus filled with Chinese up to the rafters. How the modern, formerly so bitterly hated, attracts in Peking now! Not only the cheaper seats were full, but also the boxes, where Chinese and Manchus of the upper classes sat with their ladies. So, Chinese ladies and girls show themselves not only in hotels, but also in public places of entertainment, whereas a few years ago they could not appear in public under penalty of being taken for prostitutes.

It was a remarkable sight, these Manchu princesses and baronesses and other great ladies, in their magnificent gowns of gleaming, rustling silk, with their fan-shaped headdresses and their far too brightly coloured cheeks. What impenetrable mystery dwells behind their almond-shaped eyes! They brought tea, their national beverage, to the Circus. In all the boxes ladies and gentlemen sip tea; small teapots and dishes with biscuits and fruit are handed round. Everywhere I saw great ladies nibbling sweetmeats.

At the doors there are no sedan-chairs waiting for the pleasure-seeking Chinese Society, but elegant broughams. Chinese and Manchus also visit the "Arcade" outside the Legation Quarter, opposite the so-called Austrian Glacis. The "Arcade" is a sort of music-hall where chiefly kinematographs are produced, and where there appear now and again faded and not very attractive singing and dancing girls who do not put too many difficulties in the way of closer acquaintance. There are luxurious easy-chairs for the great people of the Legation and the commercial magnates; ordinary chairs for ordinary people, chiefly occupied by privates and non-commissioned officers of the Legation Guards. Pathé Frères and other authorities see to it that the newest European films are represented here, and with intense interest the Chinese and Manchus gape at them from their easy-chairs, as they sip tea and smoke pipes or cigarettes. It is evident from the fierce applause and the smiling faces of the Chinese gentlemen, when they see some *risqué* high kicks and can-cans of the European girls, that they are no longer unsusceptible to this modern amusement; but the glances of the Chinese and Manchu ladies show clearly that they consider all this shocking. That European women have a great attraction for Chinese is well known in Peking. There are Chinese aristocrats and big-wigs who advertise themselves in Peking and Tientsin with a white *bonne amie,* who is kept in great style, and the young ladies of Telegraph Lane in Peking look

THE CH'IEN MÊN STREET.

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anything but cross when now and again one of their *bons amis* introduces a wealthy Chinese man-about-town.

The bioscope films—*Tien ying* or "lightning shadows"—have become immensely popular in China, and here and there even begin to supplant the ancient, very popular Chinese theatre. In the large Ta-Sha Lärl Street, in the Chinese City, some theatres where special Chinese plays used to be given have been entirely re-arranged for bioscope productions, although only in very exceptional cases are Chinese scenes reproduced. The bioscope seems an invaluable instrument for giving the Chinese people some idea of life in Europe, of which they used to have not the slightest notion; and the Chinese also forms by its means a clear conception of modern inventions. I positively saw in Peking good films of balloon ascents and aviation. It is certainly a sharp contrast to visit the Chinese City in the evening, to go through the sombre mediæval Ch'ien Mên Gate, to walk along the wide Ch'ien Mên Street, where not a single European can be seen at that time of day, to pass into the crowded Ta-Sha Lärl Street and traversing a long, dark passage, to enter a Chinese theatre and see on the canvas a Paris Boulevard with Parisian gentlemen and girls, clearly on the spree, sitting, half seas over, in front of a café. Shade of Confucius, how is it possible?

If the great Sage could only glance for a moment at the large dining-hall of the Hôtel des Wagons Lits! Nearly every evening one sees Chinese

mandarins and rich merchants enjoying the French menu, without the traditional chopsticks. They use knife, spoon, and fork, and are entirely at their ease among the "foreign devils." It is clearly *bon ton* for the Peking *haute volée* to have dinner now and then in the *Liu Kuo Fan Tien* (Hotel of the Six Empires), even if they get their *selle de chevreuil* instead of sharks' fins, and *salmi de perdreaux* instead of minced slugs. Their gorgeous, ample silk garments make a rich and strange impression among the European smoking jackets and evening dresses, and the way in which they handle knife and fork and smack with their tongues when eating shows that their European emancipation leaves room for improvement.

The worst thing is the way in which the grant-hunters and loan-agents kow-tow to the high mandarins who dine here and flatter them.

I myself was persecuted for a considerable time by an American who told me that he was in the timber business and hoped to get extensive orders from the Chinese Government. It is well known that there is a great dearth of timber in China. After I had accidentally mentioned that I knew a minister of the *Nung Kung Shang Pu* (Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Trade), this American persisted in making all kinds of indiscreet requests to me, desiring me to introduce him to that minister, of whom he had in vain tried to get an audience. Of course I did not enter into his proposals.

Now and then one is approached by guests in

the hall of the hotel who, after some remark about the weather, sound one as to whether one could perchance introduce them to some high Chinese authority. They are a queer lot, the visitors of Peking's premier hotel, although they all dine in evening dress. Once on a very busy evening I sat next to an American in evening dress who gave himself the airs of a millionaire. Afterwards I found him standing behind the bar in Circus Barowsky. His Highness was a bar-keeper. On another occasion, at afternoon tea, I was accosted by a suspicious-looking, though very well dressed personage, whom I saw again the next evening as the croupier of a gaming-table. And amongst all these more or less questionable individuals sit important diplomats, globe-trotters from the upper ten, and bankers with world-famous names, just as in the Hôtel de Paris at Monte Carlo; high, low, and middle-class are mixed into a social hotch-potch.

Within a few weeks the hotel guests began to annoy me. I forgot my views of the first day. I found it impossible to collect my thoughts in the clamour and the rushing to and fro of all these noisy, showy wanderers. Behind the assumed airs of luxury and distinction I perceived too much of the snobbishness and vulgarity of Monte Carlo and such places. And I moved into a small, second-rate hotel outside the walls of the Legation Quarter, in the Tartar City, opposite the Italian glacis on the Viale d'Italia, the Hôtel de Pékin.

THE STREET OF ETERNAL REPOSE

CHAPTER V

THE STREET OF ETERNAL REPOSE

IT is advertised in the papers as an *hôtel de tout premier ordre*, this Hôtel de Pékin; as *nouvellement meublé*, with *d'énormes verandahs, cuisine renommée*. But it is what the French of Paris would call *une boîte*, a collection of shabby *mansardes*, although they are all on the ground-floor, furnished as poorly as possible with ramshackle beds, worn-out mattresses, sheets full of holes, and ordinary iron garden chairs. On entering such a room one feels a sensation of being down on his luck, of having seen better days, of expecting to go to a pawnbroker by and by to pay the bill. It is a narrow, elongated structure, the longer wall facing the street. The rooms are comfortless, decay stares at one from broken tables and dilapidated ash-trays that seem to be advertisements for whisky.

Yet I lived here for nearly a month, full of serenity and quiet thought, and from this miserable little hotel I learned to understand Peking.

The situation is splendid, much better than that of the luxurious Hôtel des Wagons Lits, for it faces south, there is sun all day long.

It was chilly and cold in the Wagons Lits Hotel. Even at the end of October the central heating apparatus was not yet in working order, and after dinner the visitors, shivering with cold, in thick wraps and coats, sat in the hall, longing to creep as soon as possible under warm blankets. There it was cold even during the day. There was but little sunshine in the rooms facing the street, and the windows fitted badly.

But the sun shines all day long on the poor little Hôtel de Pékin. It stands in one of Peking's enormous boulevards, which is called by foreigners "Viale d'Italia," but the real name of which is Ch'ang-an Street—the Street of Eternal Repose![1]

Could I wish for anything better? I took it as a symbol. Truly, I did find rest here, and here, in this shabby little room, with the poor furniture, I felt Peking's soul nearer my own. I shall never forget this Ch'ang-an, this Eternal Repose. From my window in the "Wagons Lits" I looked out on an ugly bamboo scaffolding full of workpeople carrying mortar and bricks: here in the Hôtel de Pékin I had a wide view across a desert-like stretch of sand, not yet built over, crossed by a simple path to the Ch'ang-an Street, which is a wide avenue lined with trees, full of traffic, but at a considerable distance from the hotel. Looking across the boulevard, one sees the high glacis of the Italian Legation, before it a parade for drill. The Italian flag waves on the ramparts.

I have not yet spoken of that glorious sun of

[1] Ch'ang-an was the name of a former capital of the Empire.

Peking, and the pure blue sky, everywhere the same, tender yet brilliant. The sky at Peking is nearly always full of sunlight. Translucent golden light pours down upon Peking day after day. It seemed to me like a solemn anthem. This, indeed, is the sun for an Imperial City, where the Son of Heaven dwells and is enthroned. Even in the midst of wintry cold it is like a gracious gift shed by Heaven on mankind.

I rarely saw it rain in Peking, and hardly ever noticed clouds.

Nearly always the pure dome of heaven rests brilliantly blue and cloudless over the holy city of the holy emperors. In the clear, transparent sunlight the yellow tiles of walls and roofs glimmer like gold, monuments of white marble soar aloft in virgin whiteness, the green and blue and mauve and violet of pagodas and terraced gates shine in unearthly tints. Anthems of light, hymns of colour, burst forth over the Imperial City, and the sky is blue like the garments of the Madonna in the pictures of primitives, the clear, warm blue, *le bleu céleste*, which brings peace to the soul. I once met a nun from the Hôpital St. Michel in the Legation Quarter, where I was calling for some medicines, and I inquired how long she had been in Peking. "Vingt-cinq ans, monsieur, et j'espère bien y mourir." It was said so simply, without the slightest affectation. I asked her why, and whether she liked Peking so much. "C'est le ciel de Pékin, monsieur, il n'y a rien au monde comme le ciel de Pékin." And she told me that

she was not French, as I thought, but Italian. She had at first been for some time in Paris, but she pined away there, because she hardly ever saw the sky. She was then sent to Peking.

" Et ici, monsieur, j'ai retrouvé mon beau ciel d'Italie, même plus bel encore."

Whenever she felt grief or restlessness she gazed long and intensely at this " beau ciel de Pékin, où j'ai retrouvé tout mon calme. Il me semble doux de mourir ici, de reposer sous ce ciel de Pékin."

In the morning the sun awoke me in my small, shabby room at the Hôtel de Pékin. It was indeed a bare little den, but the rays of the sun sang in it. It was warm there all day long, although we were already in late autumn.

I called the boy, who chatted genially with me, bringing the *ch'a-hu,* the teapot, in which, after the Chinese fashion, I made my tea myself. He inquired anxiously whether I had slept well, and whether I was getting on with the Chinese language. The correct waiters of the Wagons Lits Hotel would not have shown any such interest ; they serve silently, and speak only in reply to questions. After the boy had left, I sat down at my little window, a low window near the ground, with little square panes, and I looked out into the open space. At a distance, across the small plain, I looked at the traffic passing through Ch'ang-an Street, at the hooded carts with their yellow woodwork and indigo-coloured tilts ; at the big mules and gentle little donkeys with their riders ; at

CARAVAN OF CAMELS READY TO START.

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the pedestrians, solemnly striding along in their spacious blue garments.

The finest sight was when a caravan of camels passed across the sandy stretch in front of my window, going slowly, very slowly. Great ruddy Mongolian camels, in woolly winter coats, with lion-like manes, high, stately. They are heavily loaded, but hold their heads high. Their eyes are big and dreamy. The huge creatures wend their endless way with long strides. Far, far away they go, through arid deserts, across wide plains, passing the frontiers of Manchuria and then of Mongolia, still carrying their burden, still slow and solemn and weary of the march. They always go in single file, never side by side. They have no notion of either time or space, and it seems as if these huge, scriptural beasts, so quiet under their heavy burdens, so meek but yet so stately, possess the inner peace of soul of higher beings. Was it an accident that I so often saw seven together—seven, the holy, mystical number?

The foremost had a big bell, with a strange mysterious clink which I got to know so well that a clear vision of the whole caravan came before me directly I heard it.

After having seen that file of tilted carts and donkey carts and riders pass, and now and then a slow caravan, it was with quite a shock that I used to hear suddenly the clang of bugles, and to see European sailors and marines marching with their small pieces of artillery out of the gate of the Italian glacis. Brass bugles sounded their

flourish or a cheering march, and the small Italian sailors, in smart closed files, began their drill, commanded by small, energetic officers with drawn swords. But I was always glad to see them disappear behind the walls of the Italian glacis, and everything return to its usual antique Chinese aspect.

At ten o'clock came Mr. Wang, my first Chinese teacher, with whom I studied Mandarin-Chinese. It is hardly credible what a vast difference there is between this official Chinese of the Mandarins and the Chinese language of the Fuhkien Province, which I have spoken fluently for the last eighteen years. Whenever I speak this Amoy Chinese, Teacher Wang no more understands me than a Frenchman understands an Englishman. I expected to learn another dialect, but as a matter of fact it is another language.

The worst times were those of the "tiffin" and dinner of the "*cuisine renomée*" in this "*hôtel de tout premier ordre de Pékin,*" for the fare was horrible, however nice the menu looked. Often I turned tail and went to the Hôtel des Wagons Lits, tied too strongly to modern civilisation to be able to swallow bad food; and as a real European of the twentieth century, notwithstanding all my sentiments for ancient Chinese ages, I enjoyed and welcomed a modern French menu.

At two o'clock arrived my second Chinese teacher, Mr. Yang, and if I did not send him away to go walking and sight-seeing alone it meant again cramming Chinese until four or half-past.

ÇARAVAN OF CAMELS.

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The Street of Eternal Repose

At five o'clock (it was the end of October) the sun began to disappear, and then I felt as if a friend had left the room, so chilly and lonely did it suddenly become. I then summoned the boy to make a fire, and sat down at the window, just looking out for a while. The hours at my window at five o'clock, when dusk fell, were my most beautiful hours in Peking.

The traffic was not so great then as in the morning. The tilted carts, the rickshaws, and the donkey-riders became rarer. A dark blue twilight began to descend slowly on everything, and strangely sad stood the leafless trees of autumn along the boulevard. And a wonderful restfulness filled the wide Ch'ang-an Street.

Sometimes it might happen that a late caravan came home, moving towards Ha-ta Mên Street. In the growing darkness the forms of the ruddy camels loomed fantastically large in the tranquil dusk.

And then, strange and unreal, here and there electric lights were switched on along the ancient Street of Eternal Repose, bits of modernity, lighting up the ages of antiquity.

Then the glacis walls of the Legation Quarter loomed far above me, and I felt happy to be in the midst of Peking, unprotected, unarmed, and trustful.

I shall not easily forget my window in the Street of Eternal Repose in the gloaming, Peking far-away, free from everything, absolutely alone, alone with my thoughts.

It was then that I felt something of Peking's

past, then that I became deeply conscious of the philosophy of China's ancient sages, conscious that all is transitory, that everything passing before our eyes is but illusion.

All that I saw here, the beautiful old tilted carts, the meek ear-flapping little donkeys, the peaceful caravans, all had been passing through Peking for ages and ages, and already the time was approaching when all would be over.

Had not the minister Hsü Shi-Chung already prophesied that the steam horse would supplant the beasts of burden that wearily wind their way along? Had I not a short time ago listened to a mandarin who called on me, and who unfolded future plans for an electrical tramway system all through Peking?

Now I must record something curiously personal. Not far from my room there stood on the Ch'ang-an boulevard a thing that strangely affected me. It was a wooden gate, a *p'ai-lou*, ever so old, weather-beaten, with rifts in its beams. A *p'ai-lou*, like so many others in the middle of an avenue, with three gateways, three ship-like roofs on a broad timber structure, carved like lace, wonderfully dainty and exquisite. The wood was greyish-brown with old age, the green and blue above had run together, and the carvings, brittle with age, were on the point of collapse.

But this ancient gate (Ch'ang-an Mên is its name), this Gate of Eternal Repose, stands there still, touching in its fragility; and it affected me as intimately as if I had seen it in a former

TILTED CART WITH MULE.

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existence, as if in a past life—who knows?—it had been something to me. The old gate stands, like many *p'ai-lous* in this town, at a point where two streets run into the Ch'ang-an Avenue. The one on the right is the Thomanstrasse of the Legation Quarter, the other is a Chinese street leading into the Imperial City, the Wang-fu-ching Street.

So, quite near the Legation Quarter, that modern, featureless, ugly structure, stands this Gate of Eternal Repose, wonderfully strange and old, like a half-vanished reminiscence. Is there not here and there far away in our souls the memory of long-lost beauty, of perished love or friendship, seeming unreal when it shines out into our life, and yet so intensely dear to us? Weather-beaten, frail, and slender in its helpless old age, with its lace-like carvings, now and then a remnant of blue and green colouring gleaming from the grey-brown wood, a thing beautiful, that may become ugly but remains fair until the moment of down-fall, this Gate of Eternal Repose became one of my most valuable memories of Peking. And each time I passed underneath it a reminiscence of something so sacred that I dare not speak about it began to glimmer within me. Years may come and years may go, but what is fine and exquisite will remain fair until the very end.

The poignant contrast between old and new that breaks out everywhere in Peking clings also to this Ch'ang-an Mên, although it could not assail its delicate beauty, for that is imperishable.

Beneath its lofty arches two police-officers in modern uniform watch day and night, regulating the traffic on both sides. Although their ancient Mongolian faces, arched eyebrows, and long pig-tails fit in very well with the ancient beauty of the gate, their European coats with shining buttons, their Western swords and rifles are ages and ages younger.

But the most curious, and also the most painful, thing happens just before dusk turns into night. Then suddenly two lights in the frail lace carvings of the arches begin to shine out, modern, nervous bulb lamps of the Electric Light Company, two glowing eyes of our modern times, victorious over this delicate dying vestige of antiquity.

THE LAMA TEMPLE

MARBLE LION IN THE LAMA TEMPLE, YUNG-HO KUNG.

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CHAPTER VI

THE LAMA TEMPLE

ONE dreary afternoon in October—one of the few with an overcast sky in which rain seemed to linger—I went to the Lama Temple known to all travellers. Its real name in Chinese is not Lama Temple, but a much finer one—it is *Yung-ho Kung* (the "Palace of Eternal Harmony"). The Emperor K'ang Hsi originally intended this temple as a palace for his son, Yung Chêng, but Yung Chêng desired to restore Buddhism to honour, for it had suffered more or less in consequence of his father's protection of the Jesuits; and after K'ang Hsi's death, in 1723, he had the palace transformed into a temple for Lamaist Buddhism.

At the cry of "ch'ê, ch'ê!" about twenty rickshaws flew towards the hotel door; with difficulty I hoisted myself into one of them, which immediately took me away.

The Peking *yang ch'ê* (foreign carriage), a means of conveyance introduced only a few years ago, became immediately popular. It was imported from Japan. The *jin-riki-sha*—that is, "human power cart"—or rickshaw is the most wretched, un-

comfortable, and miserable carriage I know of; at least, the Peking ones are. Where the roads have not yet been sufficiently levelled—and it is only a short time that the steam-rollers have been at work on the boulevards of Peking—the local rickshaw hobbles and wobbles over the ground till some people get quite as seasick in it as in a ship in a swell. Sometimes one is shaken hither and thither as if he were being broken on the wheel, and all one can do is to hold on to prevent one's self from being hurled out of it. One might order a more luxurious rickshaw on rubber tyres, but as a rule I thought it better to drive as the Chinese do. So I was bumped and thumped along the Ch'ang-an Boulevard, through the beautiful Ch'ang-an Gate, towards the big artery of the Tartar City, that extremely wide boulevard running north from the Ha-ta Mên through the so-called Eastern City (the *Tung Ch'êng*).

At the beginning of this Ha-ta Mên Boulevard, which seems endlessly long, one still finds some European shops, and frequently meets Europeans. But having once passed through the white marble Ketteler *p'ai-lou*, European things and persons are rarer and soon one feels oneself in the heart of Peking, altogether Chinese, with nothing but Chinese faces about, swallowed up and lost in the bustle and clatter of the great metropolis.

What an immense boulevard is this Ha-ta Mên Street! Where is there in any of Europe's capitals an avenue so broad, so spacious, so long, and offering such a magnificent view? The ancient

HA-TA MÊN STREET.

houses glow in fervent flames of *vieil or* and deep golden lacquer, their roofs, door-posts and window-sills are carved like lace and curved upwards at the corners. They have their dragons and phœnixes, fishes and griffons, signposts of black and blue or red and gold. There is a Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro within where golden dust and gleams of light dance even under a rainy, cloudy sky without any sunshine; there is a glow and glimmer everywhere of fervidly smouldering light and gold. This endless Chinese boulevard is like a subdued fire, not bursting into flame but glorious with inner conflagration. Every moment a new colour flashes before one's eyes, a new glory appears, a fresh contrast bursts forth in hues never seen before, never dreamed of. It is all old and weather-beaten, mouldering and frail; here and there it is on the verge of collapse; it is dirty and sordid, but yet it is splendid. It is an anthem, a flame of fire, a triumphal hymn of light and colour, neither smothered nor extinguished by the ages, because its material is imperishable, its essence unassailable. Amidst this wealth of fiery colour Rembrandt would have been intoxicated with happiness. How deeply did I feel, during my many long walks through this street and through so many streets of Peking, that the Chinese must love this city with a lofty and a jealous love. How hateful it is to go back from all this ancient, almost sacred, splendour of bygone ages into the vulgar, dead, featureless streets of the Legation Quarter!

But still more glorious becomes the view in a

square into which lead four streets. At each corner is an old and wonderfully fine *p'ai-lou*, four *Tung-hsi p'ai-lou*, the Gates of East and West, each commanding a long vista. Each gate has three square passages with richly carved beams and posts in dull colours, generally green and blue. The lace-like carving represents flowers, birds, and dragons; there are ship-like roofs with lions, fishes, and heraldic animals in the ancient style, richly ornamented.

One only gets a good idea of the princely plan of Peking at a square like this, with a vista into the wide avenues leading to remote distances which make one understand what a geometrical design is that of Peking. At the farther end of the long Ha-ta Mên Boulevard, in a corner of the north-east Tartar rampart in a deserted quarter of Peking, stands the big lama temple.

At first sight it seems vulgar and shabby, like so many beautiful things which only reveal their beauty later on. Near a small gate a vagabond, dirty lama priest, in a soiled mauve cloak, with his face unwashed and sores on his shaven head, begs for *mên-ch'ien*, gate-money. He will not let me pass unless I pay a *mao-ch'ien*, a silver piece worth ten American cents. Now I enter a square court full of strange trees with twisted branches, dying from exhaustion; the stones are overgrown with weeds. I remember that Pierre Loti, in his "Derniers jours de Pékin," [1] called this a *petit parc*

[1] Pierre Loti, "Les derniers jours de Pékin." Paris, Calmann-Levy. (IV. "Dans la Ville Impériale.")

funèbre, and really it has something about it of death and oblivion. A feeling of tranquillity comes over me. This is not fancy. I felt it in all the large monasteries and temples in and around Peking which I visited, most strongly in the *Huang Ssŭ,* the Yellow Temple, outside the town.

By the concentrated thought of really pious monks, by the mystical sound of gongs tuned to particular tones, by the many prayers and hymns, and especially by the sacred *mantras,*[1] the astral atmosphere of such a temple is cleansed from all impure influences and evil elementals. It acquires such intensity that the vibrations continue for some months and even years afterwards, but these vibrations can be perceived by the higher consciousness alone, and that only if it be sufficiently developed. It is not strange that many visitors do not feel it. Those who do feel it experience it as real, just as others perceive the coarser vibrations of smell or sound. I felt happy because these ethereal vibrations in the atmosphere reached me; for this would help me through much that was loathsome, such as, in the first place, the disgusting begging of the rabble of monks specially told off to receive the *fan kuei,* the foreign devils.

After passing through this square forecourt, I see another wall and a little gate where another unsightly, dirty lama is begging for *mên chi'en.*

[1] *Mantras* are sounds producing a mystical number of vibrations, that by occult force develop higher powers and attract higher beings. They generally take the form of sacred words or devotional phrases, which cause vibrations both on the physical and on the super-physical planes.

I enter the first temple-court. I know already from experience that there will be three of these courts, that each complex of temples is designed in the mystical number three, in three groups.

In the centre is the main building, with majestic, supreme Buddhas; on either side are subsidiary edifices, with *Lohans* (Arhats) and minor disciples and adepts.

The brick pavement here also is overgrown by grass and weeds, and the temple buildings are weather-beaten, neglected, and dirty. On white marble platforms are bronze mills, prayer wheels that revolve at the slightest touch. On the grey-brown roofs, decorated with heraldic monsters, glitter yellow tiles, the golden-yellow tiles of Peking, that also shine full of glory on the walls of the Forbidden City. A monk in a yellow frock, who begins by whining for money, leads me along wide stairs to the main building, all the doors of which are closed, doors magnificently adorned with fine carving, through which the light filters.

A door opens, closing immediately behind me. I find myself in a large square space and feel a profound tranquillity. I walk on soft matting. At first I cannot see distinctly; the light is but faint in this windowless temple-hall. A little light comes through the carvings in the upper part of the doors; then the colours slowly emerge, gold and yellow, sacred and dim.

On three huge gilded altars are sitting three immense Buddhas of a deep, ruddy *vieil or*, the colour of very old Chinese lacquer. Are they the

BUDDHIST TRINITY IN THE LAMA TEMPLE.

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first three Dhyani Buddhas, Vairochana, Akshobhya, and Ratna-sambhava? My guide does not know. Behind sombre gold-yellow hangings sit these Buddhas of enormous size, so calm in their golden lotuses, with their strange smile full of ecstasy, their wonderful dreamy eyes behind half-closed eyelids. They seem as if they were about to reveal the mystery of life and death and immortality that we have been trying eagerly and sorrowfully all our lives to understand.

What overwhelming tranquillity, what eternal unchanging restfulness, what inexpressible charity, brood on these Buddha faces! They have transcended all things; absolute victory radiates from these golden gods; heavenly joy descends into one's soul, in which everything dissolves into a holy, divine peace. He who is able to feel this art, this supreme achievement, has no further need of any book on Buddhism; for him nothing requires explanation. Libraries full of ancient Sūtras can teach him nothing. The mystical smile of these golden gods of peace has already revealed the divine secret; his highest intuition has gazed into the infinite.

In front of the three altars of the three Buddhas there are five marvels of Pekingese art, five immense altarpieces—the Wu Kungs—of antique cloisonné a colossal incense-burner larger than a man, two vases for flowers, and two chandeliers. It is the antique cloisonné of Peking, a sacred secret lost for ever, golden, red, green, and white on unique deep blue. Lost for ever, like that of so many

inimitable sorts of porcelain. The mighty artist, the Emperor Ch'ieng Lung (1736-95), intended these wonders for the three Buddhas, because only they were worthy to receive offerings of incense, flowers, and light.

By a miracle—was it occult protection?—this Lama temple was saved from the Boxers and the foreign Western vandals who in 1900 looted and destroyed innumerable treasures of Pekingese art. These wonderful altar-pieces are unimpaired, virginal, in their secret, mystical colours.

In the dim light of the temple hall there burns, quite near the central Buddha, under a hood of gauze, a solitary light. The sombre, solemn *vieil or* of the huge Buddha shines in this faint dusk with a strange glow, that gives one a thrill as if all anxiety and passion would pass from the soul, leaving divine and deep peace. The deep yellow curtains and hangings before the altars affect one also in an unusual manner.

This cannot be an accident. Behind this there must be some hidden secret of the occult meaning of colours, of which the West knows as yet so little.

It seems to me as if it had been ordained that I should make the long voyage across seas and oceans from far-away Holland to India, from India to China, merely to behold the sweet smile of these Buddhas, full of ecstasy, revealing the great mystery of life and death. For what in life is accidental? Is not every experience determined by our own inner, although unconscious, impulse?

The Lama Temple

No, it cannot be by mere chance that I, a pale-faced Western man, am here in far-away, sacred Peking, beneath the glances of these golden Buddhas, and that their wonderful serenity falls upon me, arming me with occult power for this, and—yes, who knows?—for how many after-lives.

I turn away with difficulty from the divine, dreamy eyes, and look about for fresh wonders. And see, from the lofty, broad walls of the temple hall glimmer heavenly colours. I go nearer, as if drawn by compelling voices.

These walls are a wealth of colour, of sacred painting, like the old churches of Italy. Are they frescoes by some unknown Chinese Angelico? No, they are not frescoes, but paintings on silk and paper, pasted or hung against the walls ever so long ago; old, very very old! Even the most brilliant colours are dim and sombre from age. Much incense, many vibrations of prayer hover over these sacred pictures. They are scenes from Buddhist Sūtras, fables and legends, painted by monks who were artists. Dazzling visions open up of Buddhist paradises and dēvalokās, where shining angels wander through wondrous dreamlands full of lotus-blossom and fabulous birds. Calm Buddhas stand there, robed and crowned with golden aura and halo; Arhats and initiates pass through purple clouds, in yellow, mauve, and blue garments; the trumpets of Dēvas sound; pilgrims wander through perilous forests to worship at the shrines of Buddhas.

But also terrible scenes! Dantesque scenes of

purgatory and hell, where the damned are driven into the flames by frightful devils; where there are streams of human gore; where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And there are dim vales of death, where the lost wander in grief along lonely, lightless paths; burial-grounds full of horrors; caverns blazing with sulphur wherein live monsters that capture human beings. And Buddhas full of charity descend into the fiery hells and dark valleys; lotuses spring up beneath their feet; the fiery streams change by their grace into pillars of ice as they redeem the damned by their compassion. And opening over a sorrowful earth spread heavens into which ascend the chosen, straight and pure like flames.

All this in the mysterious colours sometimes seen in antique porcelain, vibrating differently from the modern ones, perceived by a more sensitive consciousness. Colours, too, from the astral region, only seen in visions, such as Fra Angelico found in his divine reveries. There is one colour among them, sombre, crimson, majestical, that reveals the entire mystic inner life that blossoms forth from our humanity. And another, a heavenly violet that sings in my memory like sacred music. Is not violet the ethereal colour of devotional and pious thoughts?

The Lama Temple is therefore not only a sacred dwelling of Buddhas, but a museum of the most sublime Chinese art of painting, curiously enough never mentioned by any Westerner.

The painters are unknown; they were monks

who expressed their piety in colours, but to whom their renown was of less importance than a breath. The bodies in which they once had their temporary abode are dead and decayed, their names are forgotten; but the lustre of what was eternal and immortal in their souls shines in the divine art of colour from the walls of this Palace of Eternal Harmony. The profound piety and spiritual art of this single temple hall cannot be fully understood even after months of reverent visits. The golden gods, the altar-pieces in splendid cloisonné, the magnificent picture, make an overwhelming impression: they lift us up to the highest. The devotion they express is the same as that of the ancient cathedrals of Italy, on whose walls monk-painters, visionaries, immortalised the same ecstasies of paradise, the same terrors of hell, the same ascensions. I find it difficult to tear myself away from this beauty, that relieves the soul of all the sorrows of life. But I follow the monk, who guides me through another gate with another money-begging lama to a second temple court, also surrounded by buildings and walls.

Here is an inner court like the others, with magnificent pavilions covered with golden-yellow tiles. Two superb marble lions stand on pedestals, also gifts from the mighty artist-Emperor Ch'ien Lung, who everywhere in Peking bestowed his princely presents of bronze and marble, cloisonné and porcelain, upon sacred localities, to his immortal glory. After passing through another gate with its attendant beggar, another temple door

is opened. Each time there is *mao-ch'ien* to give to the dirty, grinning lama, until I am inside a hall, exactly like the first, of the same splendour.

Once more three golden Buddhas in a mystical atmosphere of quietness and peace rise up from three lotuses, and with sacred gesture disclose to the soul heavenly secrets of wisdom. Who form this holy trinity of gods? Are they this time Avalōkitēśvara, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra? My shabby guide does not know; he only mutters when I ask him anything and begs again for money. After all, what does it matter? Names and the sound of words do not form the essence of these Buddhas. With the one it is the divine grace of an extended hand, the benediction of thumb and index finger; with the other the profound meditation of half-closed eyes: their inner being is expressed in the restfulness of the folds of their garments in which are hidden pity and compassion, in the glow of ecstasy on the purified face. And on the walls are again visions of saintly seers; again there are paradises and hells and dreamlands, again heavens sown with lotuses, thronged with divine birds flying through violet clouds, pure souls rising like flames. And again the same sacred light, tender and faint as the evening, shining through the lace-like carving of the doors; the solitary spark, imprisoned under dark gauze, like a soul in a body; golden-yellow hangings veiling the gods, and a vague vibration of the air full of the essence of incense and prayer.

It is becoming late, and I hear already the dull

humming of a gong, quivering as I never in my life heard it before. It recalls vague memories as of former lives. The solemn evening service will begin soon, when the sunlight has vanished and the beginnings of darkness hover threateningly over men and things.

My guide still wants to show me the famous statue of the Lama temple, the gigantic, monstrous Māitrēya statue, which in the northern lama religion does not glow with *Maitri* (charity), but is a threatening, distorted terror of nightmare and damnation.

He leads me—continually doling out *mao-ch'ien* to more shabby, begging monks—across another inner court, through other gates and doors, into the last northern temple hall, where I, small and insignificant but full of the calmness and peace of the golden Buddha, gaze up at a grim giant. Not restful at all, but wild and furious, with distorted features, cruel squinting eyes, arms uplifted in threatening gestures, the immense Māitrēya towers sixty feet high to the rafters—a monster of destruction and strife. It is one of the wonders of Peking, about which every traveller speaks, a miracle, because it was made of one piece of sandalwood. But I feel nothing for this monstrous deterioration of Buddhism and withdraw from this temple hall at once, to escape from the horrible vision.

Bang—bong—pong sounds the humming gong, throbbing through the temple compound, vibrating in faint, ethereal waves. A wonderful, never-to-

be-forgotten tone. He into whose soul it penetrates knows it to be a sound of occult import, not to be imitated by any European musical instrument.

I want now to get rid of the shabby lama. I promise him a dollar, a shining Pei-yang dollar, if he will now disappear for good and leave me alone; two if he also gets the beggars away from the little gates. A grin, two hands greedily held up, and he vanishes. I am quite by myself in the square inner yard of the third temple court, alone and at peace: above me the blissful profound repose of the meditating Buddhas, around and deep within me being the mystical vibrations of the droning gong that summons to the Mass.

I walk slowly through the hallowed quiet flowing from the temple, across the silent court. I enter through the little gate into the second court, irresistibly attracted by the sound of that wonderful call. The calm of death is here, as if all life had reached the end of sorrow, and nothing can come but this clear quietness, this cool, delicious void, this undisturbed equilibrium of rest.

On the left, in the broad annexe, I noticed an open door, and in the darkness, with here and there a wavering light, a spacious hall, with long rows of seats and crimson cushions. It looks like a hall of prayer.

The gong drones on and on and the strange thrill passes through me, awakening an unknown consciousness. I stop in the middle of the court. How brilliant are the golden-yellow tiles of the

roofs! How strangely a couple of old, old trees stand there, eternal, outside of time. Suddenly a gate opens into the first court, there appears a being such as I never beheld before. Behind him comes another—a priest in superb violet; behind him another in flaming orange. They wear high helmets like Romans, with a feathery plume. Strange are these high helmets like those of warriors, above the monkish frocks which hang in quiet folds.

Silently they advance, slowly, slowly, rosary in hand, and cross the large inner court to the hall of prayer.

See, there comes another in violet, and yet another in yellow; another gate opens—one more in orange; little lama boys, urchins of perhaps six or seven, with curiously senile faces. Then others and again others, in endless file. In the solemn silence of the enclosure they move on without a sound, silent as ghosts. The brilliant colours of their frocks seem to combine in a chant. A large crowd had already assembled in front of the halls of prayer murmuring supplications. Sometimes the court is empty for a short while, but soon another priest advances, and another and again another, slowly crossing the yard without a word. There is something depressing in the slow noiseless steps. It is as if they were walking to their death.

There I stand by myself, a pale Western, strange and detached, gazing at it all, standing by a bronze praying-wheel. They must feel me to be some-

thing hostile. I have no business to be there; I am an intruder, a white barbarian; but they do not seem to notice me; quietly they go on their mysterious way.

Everywhere unnoticed gates are now opening: more yellow, orange, and violet lamas issue from them with spiritual, lean, ascetic faces and sombre, dreaming eyes; more small child-monks, with old-looking, clean-shaven little heads. I see among the old lamas types with an expression entirely different from that of the shabby beggars who conducted me. Among them are heads of thinkers and faces on which there is an after-glow of vision.

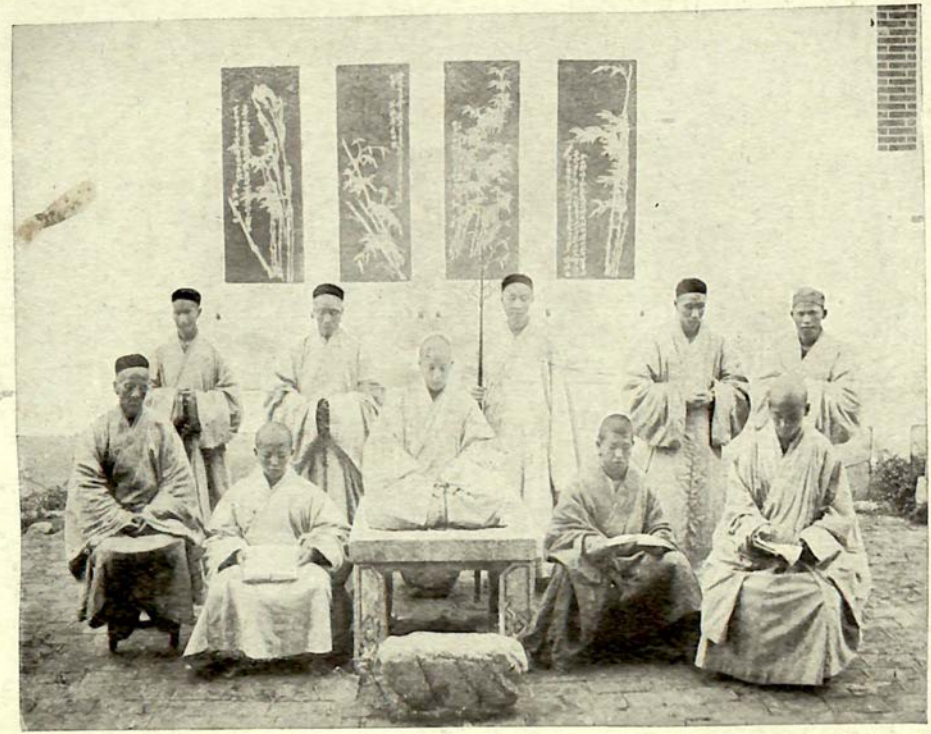
And continually there are more coming from all sides; they speak not a word, they count their beads.

Now arrive two magnificent prelates, full of pomp, in rich chasubles rustling with gold, violet, and purple, superb, like bishops in a Roman Catholic cathedral; they also enter the hall. Suddenly the humming of the droning gongs stops and there resounds a crash of blaring trumpets, unseen, infernal, so that I shiver in terror.

I never heard tones so thrilling and so awful, like hellish trumpets from the darkest depths of the earth.

In the hall nothing can be seen of this funeral orchestra. It seems to come from an adjoining hall.

On the other hand, I see on small tables curious drums, with cymbals, that are moved by a sickle-



BUDDHIST PRIESTS PRAYING.

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shaped stick. The drums are placed vertically, the cymbals are played from above downwards. The dark hall now teems with all these orange, yellow, and violet vestments. The helmets have been taken off. On the long rows of red seats with yellow prayer-cushions the monks are sitting with crossed legs, like Buddhas. Yes, now it looks like a temple with hundreds of praying Buddha-statues; only the pompous prelates in rustling silk move about with solemn tread.

Sepulchral silence, awful silence, hovers depressingly over the hall filled with praying Buddhas. Now suddenly, deep, sombre, from the dark silence arises a droning bass, as from a demon in distress, trembling with anguish. Is it a grim beast from hell that is growling? Is it a damned soul cursing?

Then all at once these hundreds of monks join in a slow, undulating, mystical hymn, dolorous, immensely grave, with Gregorian rhythms.

A thrill more intense than I have yet felt overcomes me, and takes me into unknown regions. It is like being carried away on cold waves into the ocean of night.

The motion goes on, evenly, like vast billows. Suddenly a hundred cymbals clash, subdued drums of death drone and the infernal trumpets crash a demoniacal anthem of damnation, that pierces through and through, then again it resounds from a distance like a lamentation sorrowful unto death. This echo, a plaint of lost souls, that seems to come from immeasurable distance, is certainly the most terrible of all.

Now profound stillness reigns. Not a voice whispers; there is no rustling of vestments. The stillness of death, of the end.

But from the darkest depth that single sombre bass at last drones up again, terrific, like a demon in remorse, who despairingly appeals to his God for rescue from the night of eternity.

And other damned souls wake and stretch themselves upwards in rigid despondency, and they join in a wonderful song of universal woe, which moves somewhat faster on a slightly broader rhythm. The deep bass leads with its dull drone.

Now I hear a wailing prayer, a mystical mantram sound, waking an occult thrill—"Na-mo O-mi-t'o-fo! Na-mo O-mi-t'o-fo!"[1] as if to drive out the spirits of darkness and damnation. This goes on until suddenly the gongs hum again, the cymbals clash, and the infernal trumpets blare. They stop again, but after a depressing silence quicken again in a strange echo.

This must be the end. The souls in distress are lost for ever; the powers of hell are victorious and God has not answered. Not a sigh is heard in the silent hall; unmoved, the praying Buddhas sit motionless. It is the end.

But hark! What is approaching from the farthest fastness and uttermost depth of hell? The deep bass tones suddenly grow fuller, then complain and sob and weep like a tortured demon and soar higher and higher and become a beseeching, penitential hymn. And all the other souls in

[1] *Namo Amitâbha* ("Amitâbha be greeted!")

hell hear him in the abyss, and send up their lamentations, imploring redemption. And in quicker time goes the chanting, in brisker rhythm it swells again and the holy mantram forces open places of refuge, from which comes a ray of the Light of Divinity. Such is the solemn evening Mass, at the fall of dusk; this terrific battle between light and darkness, this resonance of occult mantrams to chase away the powers of evil. This music is so terribly tragic, and the vibrations of those weird, mystical tones affect me so powerfully, that I feel I cannot bear it any longer. I seem to gaze into far vistas of previous lives, where terrible tragedies are enacted, whence frightful crimes clamour for their penalty, where ecstasy bursts into a flame of wondrous, overwhelming joy.

I see all the monks solemnly following the prelates in raising their goblets and drinking: again I feel the profound silence in which lurk fate and death.

Then I tear myself away with difficulty. I feel as if I cannot stir, as if I were fixed to the spot by a powerful magnet. My limbs seem rigid; my head swims. But at last I go, leaving without looking backwards, fleeing through a little gate. There is nobody now in the first court, and I proceed to the gates unhindered.

Still I hear the rhythmic singing, now much quicker, swelling up tempestuously, breaking farther and farther through the darkness, and suddenly, like a blow on my head, comes a light-

ning crash of cymbals, and the trumpets of hell pierce my agonised ears.

Then I hurry away. I enter one of the many approaching rickshaws that rumble off towards the large Ha-ta-Mên Boulevard, where the electric arc lights are shining already, and restless, endless streams of hooded carts, mules, and yellow Chinese pass on.

REFORM IN CHINA

CHAPTER VII

REFORM IN CHINA

THE sinologue who feels himself before all a member of the great human community is entirely free from any mercantile interest in industrial undertakings in China. He considers the question immaterial whether more or less hazardous business transactions of foreign syndicates in Peking have, at the present moment, any chance of success. After mature consideration he does not even care whether in future the present Manchu or some other dynasty, or even a Republican Government, will rule China.

The chief question that interests him is, "Does the Chinese *people* develop itself? Are my four hundred million Chinese brethren developing themselves towards a higher consciousness?"

This question is far more important to me than prying into administrative bungles, financial abuses, and political intrigues, about which one may read daily in the European and Chinese papers of Peking and Tientsin. For (and I feel absolutely sure about this) the great reform of China has started from below. It will not be achieved by

the Government of its own initiative, but either by the Government pushed on by pressure from below or by the nation itself.

There are still a good many Europeans in China who simply shrug their shoulders when one asks for their opinion about the reform. An English merchant in Hongkong told me the most frightful things about the actual condition of China, that "it is worse than ever before": in Shanghai I heard the same story, even from a couple of officials: in Java I heard from some travellers who have lately visited China, mostly Southern China, the remark, "Well, I never noticed much of that reform."

All these people say this in perfect good faith, but they have never looked thoroughly into the matter, and have not penetrated to the bottom of things. To me, who only knew China, and that merely Southern China, fifteen years ago, the first month after my return was a continual surprise at the nearly incredible speed with which reform has forced its way. And this is not my opinion alone. Even missionaries who have spent their lives there are of the same mind, and so is Dr. Morrison, the specialist on China and correspondent of the *Times,* who granted me an interview on the subject. The old order of things that made China one huge stagnant pool is not passing; it has passed: the still water has been stirred to its profoundest depths.

Those who assert the contrary are narrow-minded persons who gaze themselves blind on the

large number of bad institutions and conditions that have not yet been reformed. They do not understand that everything cannot be achieved in a day, and that such a gigantic empire as China cannot suddenly, in the course of one year, introduce a system of excellent government and perfect public institutions.

One ought to put the question in this way, "What was China ten or even five years ago, and what is it now?" The answer is that the difference is enormous, almost incredible. If each successive decade makes equally big strides, then, as the *Times* correspondent said quite correctly, "the world will be astounded."

The Rev. R. A. Joffray, from Wuchow, writes in the organ of the Christian and Mission Alliance: "It is a well-known saying that large bodies move slowly, but China—a nation ten times the size of Japan—was quicker in its modern reform movement than Japan ever was. During the last ten years greater changes have taken place in China than during thousands of previous years. No other part of the world has ever, in any period of its history, given way so suddenly to the spirit of civilisation as China, nor has it gone through such terrific inner upheavals as this country. China in its progress of reform has moved more quickly than any nation in history."

I fully agree. There are people who say in a casual manner that reform in China advances far more slowly than in Japan and who, for that reason, look down upon China. But this assertion can

only rest on ignorance of the enormous difference between the conditions in both empires. Japan comprises an area of 162,655 square miles, China of over 4,000,000; Japan has just over 49,000,000 of inhabitants, China about 420,000,000. Moreover, the Japanese were always a martial people, ever at war: the Chinese are a nation of peaceful agriculturists.

It is exactly because China's existence rests on a primeval civilisation in which philosophy and art are the highest good that, as a Young Chinese literary man, Chêng-chang Lu, truly said, in the *London and China Express:* "It is so extremely difficult for China to take up a position in a fighting world where nations compete with *Dreadnoughts* and military airships."

Large bodies like China cannot at the start move so quickly as smaller ones like Japan. There is something more. Japan from the very beginning was able to push on in its reforms, so to speak, *en famille,* whereas China is at present weighed down by a burden of debt of hundreds and hundreds of millions. It is closely surrounded by a net of Japanese, American, and European interests and ensnared by foreign intrigues, that all prevent its free development. Thus the comparison of China's reforms with those of Japan is misleading.

But the enormous development of modern education proves that reform has asserted itself already in such a striking manner that one cannot doubt for a moment that the unknown mystical powers which determine the rhythm of the world's history are manifesting themselves.

Reform in China

Remember that a few years ago the Emperor Kuang Hsü made history by a stroke of the brush, destroyed the entire system of education and instruction ingrained by centuries and centuries in the national soul. The Chinese Government then issued an order to demolish the ancient sacred temples full of idols, to build schools from the materials and equip them. To understand the importance of this one must have known the Chinese of ten years ago. The old, inveterate custom of classical examinations and the ancient idolatry went at the same moment to the wall. The Rev. R. A. Joffray tells us how no one dared to touch the temples at Wuchow when the imperial order arrived. But the highest local mandarin took a hatchet himself, crying, "These idols were made by the hand of man, they can neither help nor harm us," and with the first blows of the hatchet the spell was broken. So the temples went, modern schools, equipped after Western methods, taking their place. One must be blind not to see the deep significance of this change.

But the best result was the surprising rush to these schools. It is needless to repeat the old remark that they are not yet as good as the European ones. This cannot be avoided, for it is impossible to train an efficient body of teachers in a couple of years. One has to look at the spirit of the phenomenon, the desire of the people for modern education; the magnitude of this desire is the interesting fact. The training of teachers, of whom thousands and thousands are now

studying in Japan, America, and Europe, improves year after year.

In order to give some idea of the rush to the schools, I insert here a table showing the progress in the province of Chihli alone. It goes to the end of 1907 and is translated from an official Chinese report of the Provincial Hsüeh Pu (Board of Education), not intended for foreign publication. This provincial Education Department has, in this province alone, 31 local Boards, assisted by 131 school associations. Moreover, in 127 lecture-halls, lent by the State, public lectures are given.

Year.			Increase.
1902	Pupils in modern schools ...	2,000 ...	—
1903	„ „ „ ...	8,000 ...	6,000
1904	„ „ „ ...	46,265 ...	38,254
1905	„ „ „ ...	88,009 ...	41,746
1906	„ „ „ ...	135,461 ...	47,407
1907	„ „ „ ...	173,352 ...	37,936

The pupils of 1907 were divided as follows :—

		Pupils.	Teachers.
1	University	98 ...	13
1	Provincial school	205 ...	9
13	Higher industrial and special schools	1,612 ...	118
17	Elementary „ „ „	446 ...	40
2	Advanced training schools	395 ...	46
98	Elementary „ „	3,448 ...	165
32	High schools	2,125 ...	157
220	Secondary schools	10,599 ...	521
8,675	Elementary schools	148,397 ...	8,969
121	Half-day schools	2,971 ...	133
121	Girls' schools	2,625 ...	53

All these schools, where education is not at all good yet, although it improves every year, are arranged on a Western basis, and that is saying enough. These are the figures for one province only, and only up to the beginning of 1908.

This book was published in Dutch in the autumn of 1910; we have now left even 1911 behind us, and the increase is probably much greater still. At the end of 1909 there were in China about forty thousand modern schools, and, as an English writer correctly states, these schools are springing up like mushrooms all over the provinces.

It shows simply a misconception of the spirit of this reform to sneer at it because in a couple of years there has not been formed an eminent body of teachers, or to repeat continually that the schools in Europe are much better. The fact that temples were pulled down to make room for schools, and that there is a rush of an ambitious young generation keen to learn—this simple fact is of invaluable importance for the future of the world's history. Who looks down upon Chinese education because it is not yet perfect? Well, such a person is merely too short-sighted to understand the tendency of our age.

The next great phenomenon of reform is the movement against opium. Of course this cannot achieve its end in a couple of years. It is as ridiculous to expect the immediate disuse of opium in China as it would be to expect the immediate cessation of alcoholic drinking in European countries if that were made illegal. Such a thing

can only produce results after many years. But the *Peking and Tientsin Times* quite rightly says that the principal fact cannot possibly be denied. It is that a large and influential part of the nation is exerting itself to remove the abuse of opium. In this matter much depends on the authorities. An official of the English Legation, deputed to draw up a report on the opium question, found that the poisonous weed had entirely disappeared from the province of Shansi, in consequence of the severe action of the provincial authorities. But in an adjoining province possessing less zealous authorities the abuse was still flourishing vigorously.

Bandaging the feet of girls is an evil custom also gradually disappearing. Women and girls used to be carefully confined to the house in the apartments allotted to them. Even a guest, unless he happened to be a very intimate friend, never saw them. All this is quite different now. Girls are taught in girls' schools and one sees many more girls and women about than there used to be. When walking about in Peking and using one's eyes one cannot help noticing that reform, so to speak, is in the air. Those who have the advantage of speaking the language, and who do not isolate themselves behind a wall of stiff solemnity or official haughtiness but move about among the people and converse with them, will notice that among the citizens the ideas of reform are much more deeply rooted than among the officials. That is why, as I have said, reform is

pushing its way upwards from below, not downwards from above.

I conversed with all sorts and conditions of men in Peking—teachers, shop-keepers, merchant princes and even common coolies—and in the mind of each of them I found stirring the great ideal of reform. It was vigorous in the one, weak and vague in the other, but I felt the spirit of reform and of the new times hovering over every one and everything.

In the middle of October, 1909, the Provincial Councils met for the first time, under the chairmanship of the Viceroys, Councils on which also non-mandarins—that is to say, private persons—serve. The power of these Councils is as yet very limited, and every one of their decisions may be vetoed by the Imperial Government; but after all it is a phenomenon of immense significance that in this country with despotic and autocratic rulers the principle of decentralisation has been admitted, and a system introduced by which non-officials—that is to say, the people—have acquired the right to discuss matters and to offer advice.

It is entirely intelligible from the standpoint of so despotic a Government as the Chinese Government was until now, that only little by little do they give way to the spirit of the age. But the liberal, progressive desires of the nation are so emphatic that the Government will no doubt fulfil its promise, grant within a few years a Constitution and Parliament, and become constitutionally elected itself. The pressure of the ideas and the currents

of thought in the masses will inevitably achieve this.[1]

In Peking one can see better than in any city of the south how much reform has been achieved in a few years, especially during the last four years. The streets used to be full of puddles in which one risked breaking his neck; in the evening they were scarcely lighted by the paper lanterns, and very often unsafe as well. Everywhere there was dirt and water and a population hostile to the foreigner and to all foreign novelties. Now they are busy macadamising the roads, steam rollers are everywhere at work, the entire city has electric light, telephone wires are hung. Nowhere does one hear insulting words to Europeans; and an efficient body of police keeps order. Pure water is conducted to the city from the western hills. Bicycles and motor-cars drive through the streets, smart postmen of the Chinese Imperial Post Office distribute the letters, and a splendid fire-brigade of three hundred men guards against conflagrations.

Especially do the excellent police-force and the fire-brigade, organised by the liberal Manchu Prince Su, excite the admiration of the European press. Peking has now three railway stations, one at each of its lines—one from Tientsin, one from Mukden, and one from Kalgan. That of the Mukden line, the terminus of the Manchuria-Siberia-Europe, was built entirely after European models.

[1] The Tzŭ Ch'êng Yüan, the preliminary Parliament, has also already done a great deal of spade work. (Author's note of 1911.)

Reform in China

I am not at all blind to the two great obstacles that hinder China's development: the defective financial arrangements and, speaking generally, the inferior quality of the officials, especially with regard to their corruptibility and the infamous "squeezing" system. About the latter tales are told that make one's hair stand on end. I heard them from well-known bankers, from impartial foreign consuls and diplomats whose veracity cannot be doubted. I read hard words about this in the *China Critic*, of September 21, 1909, which I reprint without comment:—

"No far-reaching measure of fiscal reform can possibly be considered before the long-suffering people of China have obtained some security that a new system of taxation shall not serve, as the old one does, to enrich a host of corrupt officials and of still more corrupt parasites. And such security cannot be given before the whole of Chinese officialdom has learned to show a spirit of unselfishness, of which up till now there has been only a very vague promise, in the interest of public honesty and national welfare, both in the capital and in the provinces. Both the central and the provincial Governments go on still, and more feverishly than ever before, with the old game 'pull devil, pull baker,' at the expense of the community at large. The bureaucracy sinks deeper and deeper into the morass of corruption, and even trade has fallen into a state of chaos; the commercial integrity of Chinese traders, once so highly praised, gives way to inclinations which depart from rectitude."

These are hard words, but not written lightly. The late Sir Robert Hart, the well-known director of the Chinese Maritime Customs, has calculated, in a dispatch to the Chinese Government, that the so-called land tax which now yields about twenty-five millions would yield at least four hundred millions if properly levied and managed. But two things are lacking: financial specialists, able to reorganise rates, taxes, and all other financial matters in an efficient manner, and confidence among the people, that the moneys paid shall be used in the public interest, and not disappear into the pockets of the mandarins. The majority of the Chinese people refrain from paying their money for the benefit of the community for fear of the squeeze of the officials. Nearly every day one may read in the foreign and Chinese papers of Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, &c., of the horrible squeezing methods of all sorts of officials.

At the moment of writing I have before me a paragraph in the *Shanghai Times*, about the Canton-Hankow railway scandal. In a dispatch from his Excellency Tuan Shu-hsün to the Prince Regent, the most deplorable conditions of mismanagement and corruption were denounced. Payments entered twice, fictitious salaries paid to non-existing officials, and such-like frauds amounting to millions of money, have been discovered. The squeezing system is undoubtedly very deeply ingrained in the Chinese community.

This is one of the chief reasons why the Chinese,

although on the one hand they resist to the utmost foreign loans, since they bring with them foreign interference, are, on the other hand, equally unwilling to invest their money in railways and the working of claims, or to take shares in any limited company. They are too much afraid that their money will be embezzled in the form of squeeze by unscrupulous managers or officials. But the worst of it is that still more unscrupulous agents of some foreign syndicates (whom I shall not further indicate here but who are perfectly well known by the initiated in Peking) do not hesitate to employ large sums of money as squeeze in order to ingratiate themselves with the high authorities among the mandarins, so that their applications for loans and claims may have a better chance.

But to me it seems the sign of a change for the better that nowadays both the foreign and the Chinese papers regularly mention these squeeze scandals. They used to be so common that nobody even thought of speaking about them. The Government also prosecutes every now and then mandarins caught at squeezing a thing one never used to hear of. Here is already the beginning of improvement. One of the best methods for putting an end to the disastrous system of corruption is a just arrangement of salaries, so that the officials may be able to live in accordance with their position, without being obliged to embezzle. But, again, such an arrangement cannot be introduced without the entire re-

organisation of Chinese finances, which are still in a chaotic condition.

Foreign countries offer China millions of money for this purpose, and financial experts and advisers of the highest rank from abroad need only to be asked and they will come. This looks simple enough, at least on the surface. But loans of millions imply interference and control by the foreigner, and China, enlightened by the lesson and example of Egypt, desires to avoid this at any cost. She would rather suffer years of poverty and chaos than domination by the foreigner. Is not this reasonable from a Chinese point of view? China hopes to develop herself in the course of time by the influence of her reorganised schools; then she will be able from within and not under outside pressure to reorganise her finances, cultivate her soil, and work her mines. China knows quite well that at the present moment coals, minerals, and other materials worth millions of money, lie hidden in the soil. But she prefers to leave them there unused for years to come rather than dig them up by the aid of foreign capital and foreign workers, only obtainable at the cost of foreign control, and probably, later on, of foreign domination. Is this so strange from a Chinese standpoint?

She has suffered too much from foreign interference, at the cost of her best harbours and richest territories, to see mere Christian charity in the offer of help and loans, however liberal it may appear. Nor is it so unreasonable as the news-

papers make out that the Chinese Government is not prepared to grant popular representation at once; they think that a term of development of nine years is necessary. The committee of representatives from fifteen provincial Councils who met in Shanghai in order to urge that a Parliament should be summoned earlier, had no success in Peking in 1910. On the 20th of January of that year an imperial edict was issued, containing the following remarkable phrases:—

"Our Empire is of large compass, and, as neither are arrangements complete nor is the standard of education of the people uniform, we fear that by opening a parliament immediately the opposition would be found too strong, and thus the success of a constitutional arrangement frustrated. In one word, a Constitution is sure to be introduced and a Parliament is sure to be opened; but the first consideration is the question of time and ripeness. A firm step is needed for a long walk, and it is not reasonable to expect immediate results in so important a matter."

There is great wisdom in these words. A nation scarcely escaped from an absolute and tyrannical autocrat, the God-Emperor, a nation which has lived in the most complete ignorance, unaware of itself and without any education, cannot suddenly be ripe for parliamentary government.

Education now works for the future, and its seed comes up million-fold. Not before this seed sprouts will the people of China be ripe for a Parliament. I still hear the words of one of my

friends, a mandarin of the third degree. "You must not laugh at our people," he said, "when it still says and does stupid things. It is a child just awakened. We must teach it, before it can rule itself."

These last words were spoken with a voice in which vibrated something very genuine, with an amount of emotion that a Chinese seldom shows to a European. My friend is a highly-civilised Chinese who has the M.A.(Cantab.) and M.I.C.E. after his name, and who has lived a European life for years in Paris and London. One must be absolutely unfeeling, or a European obstinately convinced of his own superiority, not to sympathise with the modern patriotic sentiment, so fiercely real and so unselfishly beautiful, of an educated young Chinese. It is so powerful that during a long conversation about China's future he becomes excited, tears start to his eyes, and he shows all the feeling that a Western is hardly ever able to witness in an Oriental. But one must first have proved himself able to converse with him as man to man, not as a Western conscious of his own superiority might speak to an Oriental whom he secretly thinks inferior.

What so many European merchants and even consuls and diplomats in China contend, that a Chinese is inaccessible to unselfish feelings from which he cannot derive any material profit, is absolutely false. Those who say this, probably in good faith, have never spoken intimately to an educated modern Chinese, as man to man, dis-

carding all prejudice about differences in faith and race. It is very difficult indeed, and it takes a long time—sometimes years and years, before a European and a Chinese converse without suspicion or restraint. In consequence of the dismal experiences of the last decades, having seen his country robbed of its fairest harbours and finest possessions, a suspicion extremely difficult to remove has grown up in every Chinese regarding all Europeans. I have had intercourse with Chinese during eighteen years, but those with whom I can speak without restraint are rare birds indeed. This suspicion, this distrust, this morbid sensitiveness of the Chinese towards the European has caused ignorance and made misrepresentation possible with regard to the Chinese popular mind. Libraries may be filled with the works written by clever and learned sino-philologists about China and the Chinese. But the Chinese popular mind has escaped the notice of most of these superior persons, who are, moreover, too exclusively Western in mind and sentiment. There surely live at present thousands and thousands of modern Chinese as unselfish as possible, linked together by the ideals of unity and patriotism, without any desire for material profit. But one must not look for them among the Conservatives or the Government officials, who apprehend their own financial ruin with the advent of the new régime, and for that reason defend the existing state of things tooth and nail. And yet it is possible to find them even among the high mandarins of to-day,

if one is only able to discriminate. I know some young mandarins in high places who, I am sure, think in the first place of China's welfare and not of their own advantage. There are at the present moment hundreds of Chinese youths who, having mastered modern science abroad, refuse immediate advantages and well-paid positions in order to teach and develop the multitudes in the interior at a very small salary, and even gratuitously in cases where no salary can be spared. I know one or two very rich and wealthy Chinese who went to foreign colonies in order to instruct and awaken their ignorant brethren there, without asking for any pay at all. I know that by the side of a good deal of corruption, intriguing, and squeezing there is also a great deal of self-sacrifice and unselfishness in China, cultivated in the spirit of one great altruistic idea. And I feel that in our time seeds are germinating in this immense empire the harvest from which will some day stagger humanity.

I believe firmly and surely in the reform of China, because I have myself seen how these seeds were scattered among the people, and because here and there I have seen them sprouting.

How this reform will proceed, whether it will develop itself gradually, or—what is very probable—bloody revolutions and wars will push it forward with big, brutal leaps, seems to me only of secondary importance.

To me the principal thing is that the history of the world will, surely and certainly, behold an

Eastern race, comprehending more than one-fourth of the population of the earth, develop itself into civilisation and self-consciousness. It is moving along the clearly defined road of modern reform.

The only important thing for me is that this will come about, although perhaps by unexpected catastrophes, revolutions, or *débâcles*, which will shake the political conditions of the world to their foundations. It will happen because the future is already germinating in the entire Chinese nation, and the Western nations unconsciously need to be impregnated by Eastern ideas, for their own unassisted intellect leaves them empty and dissatisfied.

FUNERAL OF THE DOWAGER EMPRESS

THE LATE DOWAGER EMPRESS, TZ'Ŭ-HSI.

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CHAPTER VIII

FUNERAL OF THE DOWAGER EMPRESS

FOR months and months the papers had been full of descriptions of the preparations for the funeral of the Dowager Empress, Tz'ŭ-hsi. Immense works had been started, under the orders of the Viceroy Tuan Fang of Pei-Chihli, to level the roads from the Forbidden City to the Tung Ling (Eastern Mausoleum) where the Empress was to be buried —roads that it would take the funeral procession five days to traverse.

Fantastic stories about her life went the rounds of these papers. It was alleged that she, who rose to be a ruler over millions, was once a slave girl from Canton. The well-informed late Chairman of the Chinese Imperial University, Dr. W. A. P. Martin, has pointed out that all these stories are fables.[1] The deceased Empress was the daughter of Duke Chou, and therefore of good family. She married, in 1853, the Emperor Hsien

[1] W. A. P. Martin, D.D., LL.D., formerly President of the Chinese Imperial University, "The Awakening of China." Illustrated from photographs. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1907.

Fêng, as his second consort. His first consort, the Imperial chief consort, did not bear him any sons, but his second consort presented him with a boy, the late Emperor T'ung Chih. Thus her star came into the ascendant, because she was the mother of the Heir-apparent. She retained her power as regent when her nephew Kuang Hsü succeeded the Emperor T'ung Chih, and since then the whole world has looked for years and years to this Empress of the East, with whom an entire régime, centuries old, came to a last supreme explosion of despair before going under for ever.

Her death took place under our constellation of modernity, but after it innumerable ceremonies, dating from thousands of years back, were performed.

Immense paper treasures had already been burned in August. These represented her pet possessions, beautifully imitated in that material, even including clocks, dressing-tables, pipes, and whole crowds of dolls, that they might be at her service and wait for her in the beyond.

Entire companies of paper soldiers, infantry of the guards, lancers exactly imitated, in modern European uniforms, as well as immense pajongs and outriders in official garments, were thus burned two days before the real funeral, outside one of the outer gates leading from the Forbidden City into the Imperial City. They all had to precede the funeral procession into the unseen. For the Chinese are fully convinced—and this is not so strange as it seems—that all we see on earth is

but a reflection of an invisible reality, and they provide, therefore, for an invisible funeral as well as for a visible one.

But, as I saw it wittily asked in a paper, what may have been the impression on the classics Confucius and Mencius, when, on the other side of the Styx, they saw all those modern soldiers in European uniforms marching on, and, supreme horror, not the ancestral sedan-chair to convey the Empress, according to a ritual centuries old, but an elegant European brougham, that was also burned, with two large dapple-grey European horses, rubber tyres, and English lanterns?

Might not these classic sages think that the end of the world had come when they saw her driving into eternity in a strange Western carriage, with soldiers of the guard in Western uniforms? She, the Dowager of the Emperor Hsien Fêng, the Empress-Mother of T'ung Chih, who with all her sacred names in full was called Tz'ŭ-hsi-tuan-yu-k'ang-i-chao-yü-chuang-ch'êng-shou-kung-ch'in-hsien-ch'ung-hsi?

She was buried on the 9th of November, this woman who, after the manner of fairy-tales, became the ruler of four hundred millions of men, and who imposed her will and her haughty whims upon her nephew, the official Emperor Kuang Hsü.

Here in Peking was enacted during the last years a tragedy of which the real dramatic meaning will only be known after decades. Behold a young emperor, highly sensitive and artistic, who felt within him the coming of the new age, and who

desired to elevate China by a sudden bound, a man, however, without tact. Behold at his side his aunt, the Dowager of the Emperor Hsien Fêng, a woman whose like is rare in history—an artist in passion and tyranny, living out her own life to the full, at the head of a nation of hundreds of millions; a woman who would have naught of modernity because she was the deity, the artist of the old, dominating everything. She, strong, great, perfect, a woman of carefully planned schemes; he, delicate, a waverer, sensitive, a man of dreams, acting on impulse; and these two were engaged in the struggle for power. On his side fought the flower of revolutionary dreamers and intellectuals (I mention only the great K'ang Yu-wei): on hers a phalanx of conservatives, ultra-autocrats, full of petrified ideas of thousands and thousands of years ago. They were led by this Empress-Mother, a Cleopatra, a Messalina, a Semiramis, a Queen of Sheba, a Catherine de Medici—all the great women of antiquity in one, with all their haughtiness and passions. The Westerns were an abomination to her, because they brought the new, the modern to her, the full-living product of the ancient and classical. And in 1900, unconscious of the pressure of the times and of the irresistible rhythm of the world's history, she gave the signal for that action, horrible in itself, but entirely intelligible in one of her artistic and human desires, the extermination of all Europeans, a work on which the Boxers had already started. It was not her fault that this

THE LATE DOWAGER EMPRESS TZ'Ŭ-HSI AND SUITE.

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slaughter did not succeed. But the most remarkable thing is surely that, after the Western soldiers had occupied Peking, the white foreign savages had entered into the heart of the Sacred Forbidden City, the Chin Ch'êng and the iron steam horse of the West had rumbled through a breach in the sacred walls of Peking, it was she who realised that destiny could not be turned aside. So she introduced all the reforms, although with repeated lapses into reactionary conservatism, and these reforms are now breaking up China's ancient, sacred bonds, and pushing it towards a new era.

Three years ago, in November, 1908, both died at the same time, the young Emperor and his aunt, the aged Empress. He was not allowed to survive her. He will never share the joy of the reforms he dreamed of, the reforms of the Empire he loved so well. When the burden of years brought her to the grave, this artist of the old, who had struggled against him for supremacy, the supremacy that was to her the sacredness of the *ancien régime,* he too died suddenly at the same moment when, to this imperial herald of the modern, the fulfilment of his dreams seemed to have come at last. A mystery of horror surrounds his death.

So solid are the high walls here, so inexorably closed and silent are the ramparts of that mysterious Forbidden City within which a tragedy of universal importance was enacted, that no outsider, European, Chinese, or Manchu, knows exactly what occurred in that month of November, 1908, behind the red walls with the yellow tiles. People guess,

they surmise, they whisper, but they do not know. One only knows that the Emperor and the Empress are both dead, dying according to the ritual of thousands of years ago, solitary, without help, without a comforting hand, in view of the full Court, which stood at a distance because no human hand is allowed to touch the holy dying body of an emperor. And one knows that after the light in their eyes faded there were performed the primeval ceremonies which have been in existence more than two thousand years, many years before the Star of Bethlehem shone which guided the shepherds toward the Infant Christ in His manger. Before the birth of Christ an ancient divine mystery was already known to China's initiates.

A few months ago the Emperor Kuang Hsü had been buried in the Western tombs, Hsi Ling, a four days' journey from Peking, where also the Emperors Yung Chêng, Chia Ch'ing, and Tao Kuang of the Ta Ch'ing dynasty were put to rest.

On the 9th of November I saw the Imperial yellow state bier slowly, solemnly, carried over the grey hills of Peking. In it lay the dead body of the Empress Tz'u-hsi, the most dreaded, the most beloved woman, the greatest Empress of the last century, the woman who tasted of life and power through the sweetest joys to their bitter core. Reverently I bared my head and bowed when she passed, hidden in Imperial yellow, doing homage to the exalted artist who dared to live her life according to her own Imperial desire.

At six o'clock in the dreary winter morning,

THE FOREIGN AMBASSADORS IN THE FUNERAL PROCESSION.

in a cutting Arctic wind, my head buried in furs, I drove through the empty streets of Peking in a wretched rickshaw with two coolies towards the western gate or Tung-Chih Mên, beyond which, on the hilly fields outside the town, the Wai-wu Pu (the Foreign Office), had obligingly erected a covered stand for foreigners introduced by the Legations.

Near the Tung-Chih Mên there was a separate pavilion erected for the diplomats, for very important merchant princes, and for the press. I might have applied for a seat here as a correspondent of the Amsterdam *Telegraaf*, but I knew that here in this boulevard, within the city gates, the people would not be visible. All traffic was stopped, all windows and doors had to be closed wherever the procession would pass, and the access to side streets was shut off by blue cloth. The masses were not allowed to desecrate the sacred procession by gazing at it.

But it is impossible to keep the people away outside the town, along a route of seventy-five miles, and in the early morning the entire population of Peking streamed through the eastern gate. I considered that the sight of the funeral procession outside the gates would be more interesting and more characteristic, although in this case I should not see the foreign representatives walking with it, nor the Prince Regent, for they would not proceed farther than the vicinity of the pavilion near the Tung-Chih Mên.

Months beforehand the roads had been put in

order for the cortège, which was to proceed to the Eastern Tombs, Tung Ling, where also the Emperors Shun Chih, K'ang Hsi, Ch'ien Lung, Hsien Fêng and T'ung Chih, of the Ta Ch'ing dynasty, are buried. It is scarcely an accident that a mausoleum was not built for the Empress in the same Hsi Ling tombs, where stands that of the Emperor Kuang Hsü. Steam rollers were employed, princes and high mandarins had inspected the roads, and everything was done to prepare a way for the dead Empress, along which the yellow bier under its yellow canopy might move solemnly and smoothly.

The Tung-Chih Mên is an hour's drive by rickshaw from the Legation Quarter, near which I was staying, and the first half-hour I went at a flying rate along the Ha-ta Mên Street, for there was nobody about. But there was already an immense crowd in the large side avenue, to the right of the eastern gate. The entire boulevard was lined by armed police and infantry, modern troops after the Japanese model, looking smart and business-like. Carriages, hooded carts, horsemen, and rickshaws came from west and north in endless files.

Near the Tung-Chih Mên there was a crush in which I should have felt afraid had it occurred in Europe, but I was entirely at ease, for it was in China. In the midst of the cries and shrieks of coolies, coachmen, and riders, the neighing of horses and the braying of asses, I calmly smoked my cigarette in my rickshaw, knowing that no violence is ever used, and step by step, now with

a horse's head in my neck, then nearly embracing a meek little donkey, I passed through the gate, emerged into the square behind, which was full of Chinese soldiers, and passed through a second outer gate into the open fields outside, where hundreds of hooded carts with country people were approaching across the hills.

After half an hour's drive up hill and down dale, in a cutting wind and clouds of fine desert sand from the Gobi that now and again blow over Peking, I reached the pavilion from which I could see the procession. At the entrance of the Wai-wu Pu were a couple of solemn mandarins who spoke English, to receive the guests and collect the tickets, for no one was allowed to enter without a ticket received through the Legation.

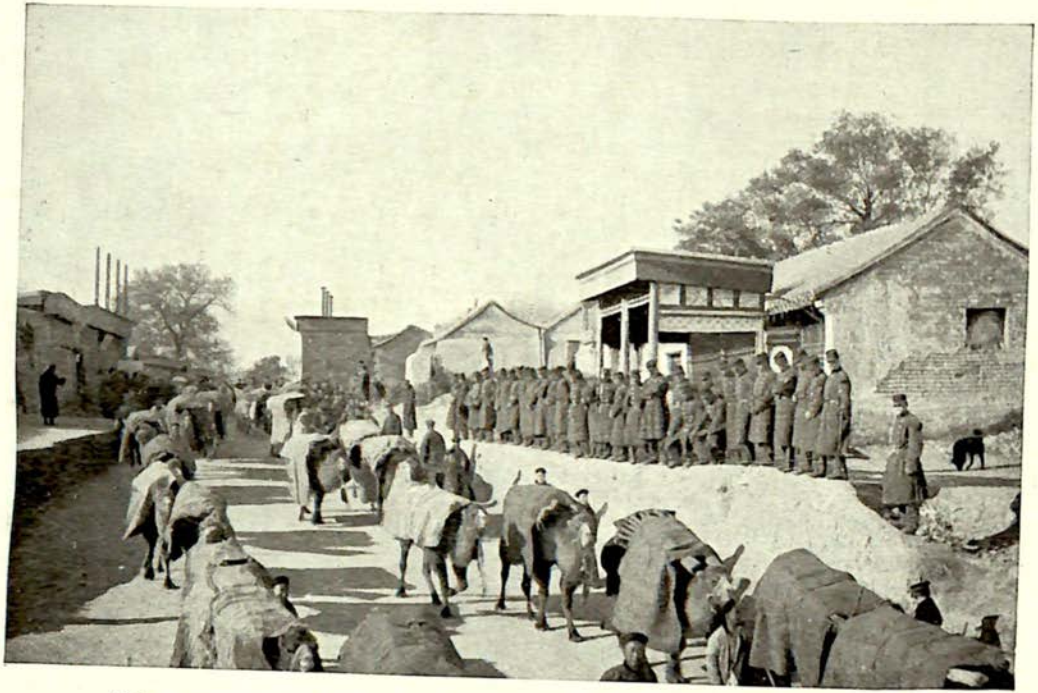
The road in front of the pavilion was crowded with people who stared curiously but not impertinently at the *fan kuei* (foreign devils). How the procession would be able to pass here was a problem, for the way was completely blocked. At seven o'clock or half past at the latest all the guests were expected to be in their places, for then all the roads would be closed. At a quarter past seven the procession left the Forbidden City, but only at half past ten could its approach be observed from the pavilion. It was a miracle how the road was then cleared in a trice. Mounted Chinese police in modern military uniforms arrived on small Mongolian horses. As if by magic all the thousands of spectators in the road were driven up the hills. No fighting or quarrelling took place,

and in a moment was done what might have taken half an hour in Europe. The policemen rode smartly on to the sandy hills on their nimble little ponies; in a few moments the road was free and the public stood on the tops of the hills.

I had already been warned that the spectacle would be disappointing, that the funeral of some wealthy merchant in Singapore or in Java might take place with greater splendour; and my expectations were not raised too high. Most Westerns do not understand that all the splendour of funeral processions is designedly concentrated on the bier.

The road along which the procession was to come descends from the town to a hollow, with hills on either side, and thus the progress as seen from the pavilion was strikingly effective. First a detachment of lancers, smart and correct in modern uniforms; then a number of small horses with yellow housings, led by coolies in single file; then a large number of coolies, more than a hundred, in long scarlet embroidered coats and with yellow plumes on their hats. They were the bearers who had to relieve the coolies carrying the bier.

Now another detachment of lancers, the red pennants waving from their lances, followed by carabineers. They belonged to the imperial guard and wore grey uniforms with red facings. Then again a number of coolies in red, row after row, on both sides of the road, carrying colours and standards and pajongs, green, red, violet, yellow, with heavily drooping streamers of silk. There



THE MONGOLIAN CAMELS CARRYING THE TENTS FOR THE FUNERAL PROCESSION.

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seemed no end of these ranks of coolies with gaudy banners; it was as if all the state banners and pajongs from the imperial palace were preceding the dead Empress.

Next followed, strange and stately, three pavilions on wagonettes drawn by white ponies, also in single file. Some one behind me explained that they were the favourite pavilions of the deceased lady, and the ponies were her pets. Other white ponies followed with trappings of yellow silk. This slow, sad procession of little horses was very touching.

Then came great camels from the deserts of Mongolia, woolly-coated, huge, like antediluvian monsters, in two files, one on either side of the road. They carried on their backs, under yellow silk, the necessaries for the tents. For this procession was a long caravan that would have to journey five days before the Mausoleum was reached. How thoroughly Oriental was the procession! First the brilliant pavilions of yellow silk, then the white ponies, now these high and stately camels. How remote from our times, how primeval.

For a few moments there was a pause. Then followed a number of coolies in red, walking without order. One ridiculous-looking fellow in the middle of the road was chewing a big chunk of bread. After the advance of some mandarins in black there was another break, after which came other coolies, all in disorder. Then suddenly appeared a couple of brilliant pavilions of fiery

yellow silk, carried by coolies, and some modern funeral wreaths, quite European. Then again a break.

The road, soiled by the passing animals, was now cleaned by coolies. All this appeared to be a sort of vanguard, for nothing further was visible.

But in the distance patches of colour might soon be noticed in the narrow decline between the hills. Red pennants gleamed against the sky, rows of horsemen approached, more small yellow pavilions descended, and behind these, immensely large, high above the ground, shone a flame of dazzling yellow. Very slowly the imperial bier advanced, square, with a huge golden ball at the top, an enormous fabric in yellow. It advanced in stately fashion, carried by hundreds of coolies on long bamboo poles high above their heads. The sun had come out half an hour ago, and the imperial yellow flamed like liquid streams of gold in the sky. I realised for the first time that yellow is the colour of emperors. Never before had I gazed upon such divine yellow, brilliant as the sun. The golden bier was preceded by hundreds of yellow banners and standards, pajongs and pennants, carried high in the sky on poles coloured red and gold. In the sunlight the approach of this golden cavalcade seemed an apotheosis of mystic colour, as if a deity were being buried.

An escort of lancers passed our stand, with carabineers and other soldiers marching silently without colours or drums. Then came a train of servants in flowing red robes and hats with yellow

THE IMPERIAL BIER.

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plumes. After them a second throng in deep red robes with the holy character Shou, the symbol of eternal life, richly embroidered in gold. These also carried standards in yellow. Yellow was everywhere, banners square or round, yellow, green, red, or blue, stitched all over with dragons and phœnixes, and more yellow pavilions carried by coolies and filled with wreaths of white flowers.

The whole sky seemed to be turbulent with these colours. After other glimmering clouds of pavilions, ponies, standards, and banderoles, there followed a multitude of lama priests in deep yellow robes. They came from Thibet and Mongolia.

At last there drew near a retinue of high mandarins. They stalked past in simple black. Their official mandarin hats were stripped of the signs of their dignity, red coral, sapphire buttons, or peacock feathers. They were the highest in the land. Imperial princes, censors, and ministers were among them; all, in profound sorrow and mourning, went by, simply dressed, like men of the people, without any suite.

The great structure was now quite near, a mass of yellow, high above the ground, flaming, shining, glowing, glittering, burning, luminous yellow, a thing never seen before, the Chinese imperial yellow, that none but its emperors may wear, under penalty of death. It proceeded slowly, although carried on its bamboo poles by over a hundred coolies. Its progress was as difficult and laborious as if all this yellow were pure, heavy gold, and

the pall metal instead of silk. It looked in the sunlight like a cascade of gold. And within this imperial yellow gold seemed to live and move a wonderful creation of blue phœnixes and red flowers. The phœnixes seemed to soar in the ethereal yellow, the red flowers to blossom mystically in the atmosphere of gold.

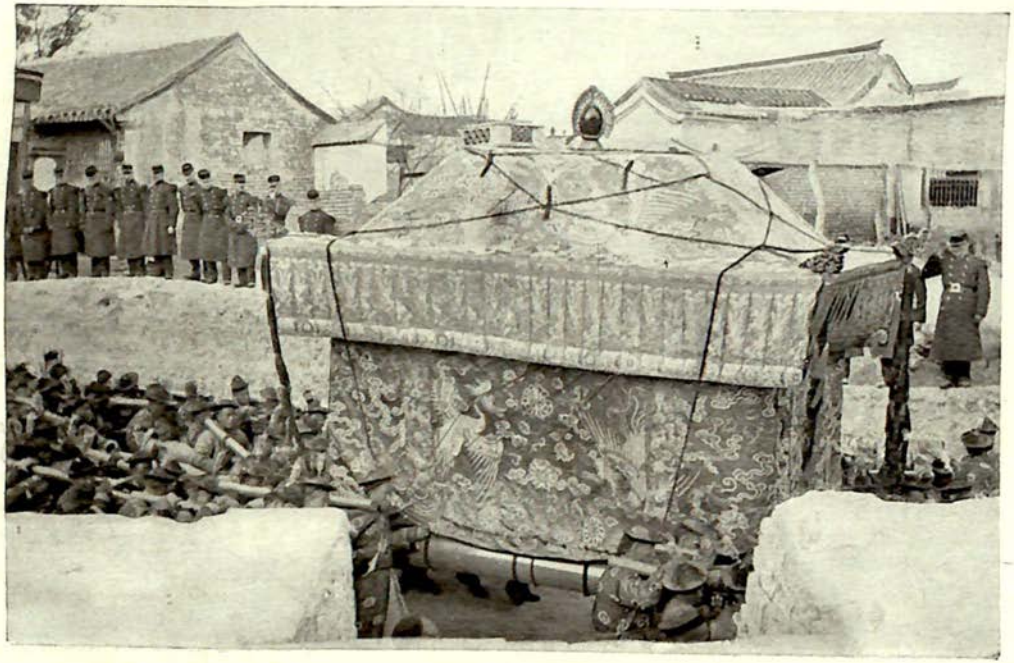
The soldiers along the route presented arms, the military guards of the legation saluted. There was a stillness as of death. Not a drum roll was heard. The thousands along the ridges of the hills were silent. It was as if a goddess were being carried by, solemnly swinging to and fro.

A lama priest indicated the rhythm for the funeral stride of the coolies with a small wooden rattle, a little ball beating upon a piece of parchment, making a dry, sepulchral sound in the depressing silence.

All the Western guests in the stand rose and took off their hats. So the colossal structure went by, the blue phœnixes soaring, the red flowers blossoming in the brilliant yellow, bursting into a glare of colour.

The golden ball at the top of the catafalque shone like a sun shooting out its rays, and brilliant light seemed to flow from the sides of yellow silk.

There she went, the Empress, the wonderful, terrible Empress whose soul, thousands of centuries old, compelled her to fight the tragic battle against modern times. And yet her heroism was great enough to make her inaugurate the



THE IMPERIAL BIER.

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reforms of China's new era. It was she who in 1900 ordered the savage warriors of Kansu and Tung Fu-hsiang to storm the European Legations so that all Westerns might be exterminated—men, women, and children. But still at the end she summoned the Western civilisation that was poison to her soul, and admitted it as if it were the highest good. She was a woman whose frown made viceroys and princes tremble, whose smile held promise of glory and wealth, whose displeasure meant a shameful death.

They took her outside the gates of Peking across the grey hills. Cold and withered was all that remained of this woman, who lived her life to the full, unconcerned about anything or anybody, whose will was law. She was the last representative of the divine, sacred, ancient Idea—the Idea that died with her when a new dawn arose in this wonderful Empire, now part of the future of the world.

I gazed at it for a long time, until it disappeared in the distance round a corner, the huge fabric with its golden yellow, its wealth of imperial glory, its glittering ball shining like a sun.

I felt a deep conviction that not only an empress was being carried into the oblivion of centuries, but that these were the obsequies of the holy imperatorship by the grace of God that made the emperor the Son of Heaven, and a demi-god at whose feet crawled a world of human beings like helpless slaves. But though a tear was in my eye because here died that romantic, sacred, imperial

dream, I felt a smile on my lips at the thought of the new, young Idea of modern times, bringing the message to all these millions emerging from the darkness, that within themselves they might all be gods.

FROM COAL HILL TO BELL TOWER

CHAPTER IX

FROM COAL HILL TO BELL TOWER

ONE of the most beautiful walks through Peking is surely that across the Imperial City, Huang Ch'êng, along the Coal Hill, Mei Shan, to the Bell Tower, Chung Lou.

Leaving the Legation Quarter by the Thomann Strasse, entering the Tartar City through the Gate of Eternal Repose, and turning to the left one passes through an old, stately wall-gate with three passages, and finds himself just in front of the red ramparts of the Forbidden City. There the guards, armed with rifles, stop every intruder in front of a strong watch-gate, but the visitor is allowed to enter the Imperial City by turning to the right.

What a deep impression my numerous walks left upon me! One goes along by this rose-coloured wall covered with yellow tiles; suddenly, at the corner, part of the Forbidden City comes into view, and exactly opposite appears an unexpected hill, gently sloping, with three pavilions covered with imperial yellow tiles on its summit.

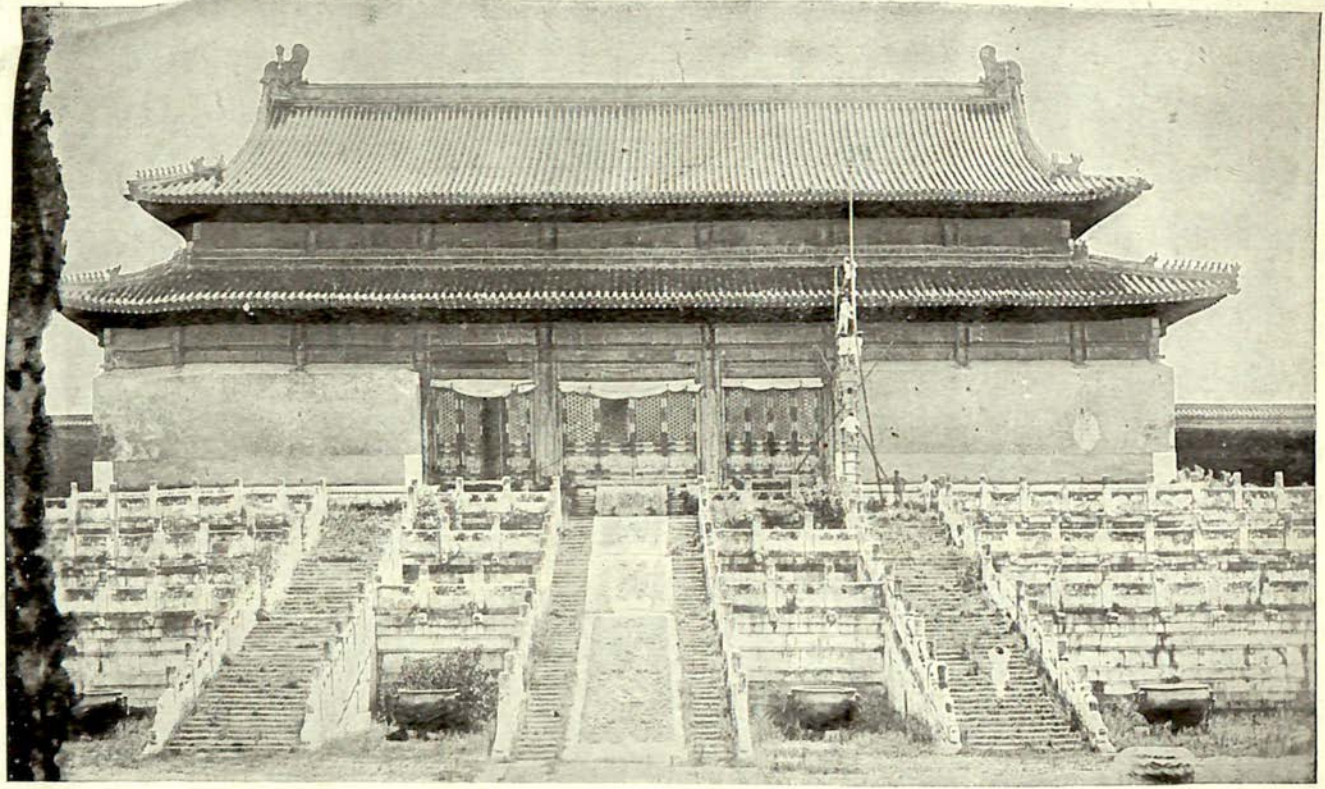
This corner seems part of a wonderful fairy-tale, full of colour. The pink wall of the Forbidden

City here turns sharply westward. At the corner, high above it, stands a magnificent pavilion, its vivid green roof also covered with yellow tiles. Here and there another pavilion rises above the wall, and in the glorious sunshine of Peking all glitters with dazzling colour.

Opposite the northern gate in this wall is a wide square, from which a broad boulevard leads to the north. On either side run walls of the same pink as those of the Forbidden City, tiles of the same imperial yellow glittering on their tops. This boulevard must have been traced by an inspired artist who desired to add greater solemnity to a pilgrimage to the emperor in that Forbidden City. Broad boulevards, interminable avenues, lead to it from every point.

No wonder that none of the Chinese ambassadors in Europe is very much struck by the royal palaces there, not even by the plan of Versailles; for in Peking everything is larger, on an immense scale, as if neither space nor time exist for the Son of Heaven. Yes, Peking impresses one again and again as a city not built for men but for gods.

The sight of the Mei Shan, the Coal Hill, comes with the shock of a surprise, for it arises quite unexpectedly in the centre of Peking, opposite the Forbidden City—a bit of Nature amidst art. On its summit stands a large pavilion with two smaller ones symmetrically on each side; the central one, under a shiplike t'ing roof with yellow tiles, showing delicately against the sky. Each is brilliantly coloured, and small trees cover



PAVILION WITHIN THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

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the gentle slopes, offering a sweet welcome to every pilgrim.

It must be a delight to ascend that hill and gaze from thence into the Forbidden City opposite.

But its beauty is barred to the uninitiated; the pink wall around its foot shows that it lies within the area of the Forbidden City.

There is a legend that in far remote ages Mongols deposited here a mountain of coal in order to have an inexhaustible supply in case of a siege. In reality not an atom of coal can be found—it is a natural hill of earth. But the Mei Shan always remained a sacred spot because in 1644 the last emperor of the Ming dynasty, Ch'ung Chêng, met his death here. On the advance of the rebels the emperor went to the San-Kuan Temple in order to inquire from the gods, by means of arrows, what he was to do—whether march upon the rebels, calmly await the attack in his palace, or, at the worst, kill himself before the enemy could kill him. It was assumed that if he drew a long arrow from the quiver the first course was indicated; an arrow of medium size pointed to the second; a short one, to the third. After ritual offerings and prayers, the Emperor drew the short wand. Ch'ung Chêng cursed the gods and the temple, and next morning his corpse was found hanging from a tree on the Coal Hill. Later this tree was punished in naïve fashion by being enclosed in iron hoops. It was destroyed with many others in 1900 by the European troops when they entered the Mei Shan.

Walking towards the north, along the long boulevard neatly levelled by steam-rollers, one may see an imposing ancient tower. It is built in the real Chinese style of classical times, when the abuse of scrolls and petty ornamentation had not yet debased art by too much detail. The architect made his building tower above the ground in solid and sombre simplicity. It looks more like the watch-tower of a fortress than an ornamental structure; square, with three massive stories. It is the Ku Lou, the Drum-Tower, in which primeval gongs and drums are stored. One of the immense gongs is sounded to indicate the time for opening and closing the gates, as is also done in the Bell Tower, another tower with a bell a few steps behind the Drum Tower. The Bell Tower, the Chung Lou, is the giant of brick that in the morning sends its roaring voice over Peking to announce the opening of the gates, and again in the evening proclaims their closing. The enormous bell in this tower, weighing one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, produces a tone the number of vibrations of which is unknown to the uninitiated.

It was built hundreds of years ago by the Mongol emperors, but was subsequently destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt in the same antique style, and the same bell (cast by the Emperor Yung Lo, 1402-25) which had been saved was hung in it. It was rebuilt by the mighty artist-Emperor Ch'ien Lung, who poured forth in Peking such a profusion of art. The Emperor Yung Lo had the bell

THE DRUM TOWER, KU LOU.

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suspended in this tower in order that its powerful voice might resound over the Celestial City of the God-Emperors.

There is no child in Peking that does not know the legend of the bronze bell in the Chung Lou. The Emperor Yung Lo had commanded Kuan Yin, the great artist who was initiated into the knowledge of the most secret rhythms of vibration, to cast this gigantic bell.

But Kuan Yin's abilities were not equal to the task. Twice the casting failed, twice the mould burst. The disappointed Emperor threatened to kill him if it should fail for the third time.

Ko Ai, the daughter of the unfortunate artist—her soul full of *Hsiao* (filial love)—consulted an astrologer, and this wise man was informed by the gods that the casting could only succeed when the blood of an innocent virgin trickled into the molten metal.

As the casting began, to the sound of drums and cymbals, the Emperor attending from a distance, the entire population present, the devoted girl threw herself into the fiery stream that flowed into the mould. One of the spectators tried to hold her, but she slipped from him and only one of her shoes was left in his hand.

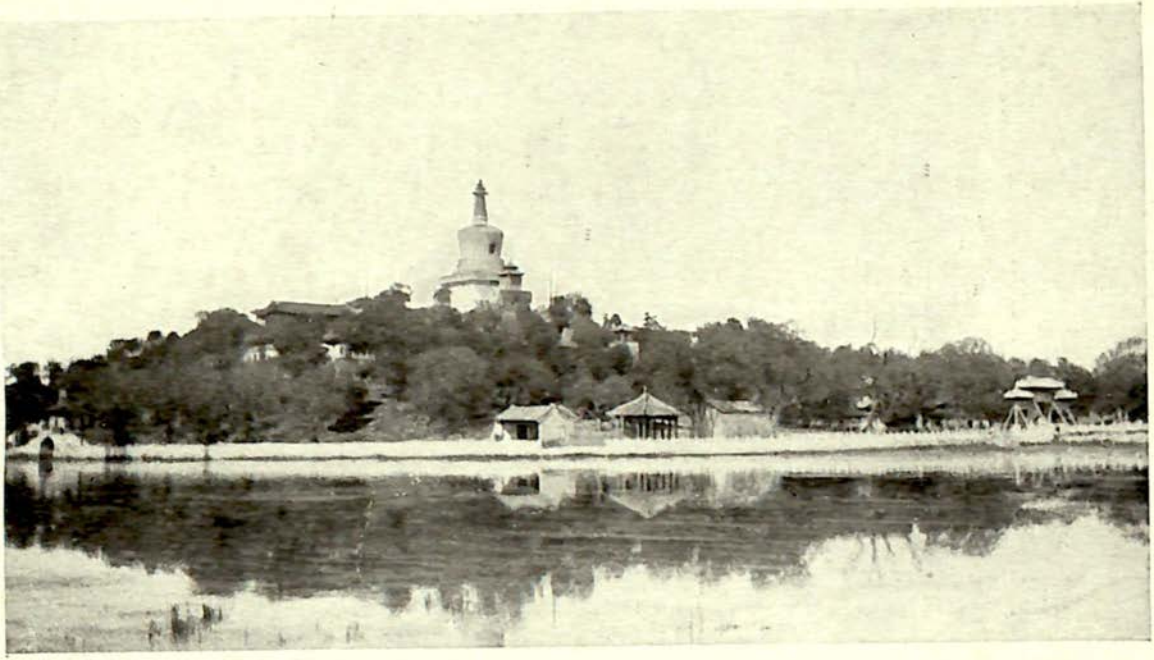
Sound and shining the bell left the mould, and Ko Ai, who loved her parents so well, was dissolved in its precious metal. Sometimes when the deep sound of the gigantic bell is dying away in delicate vibrations one hears clearly a soft moaning, *hsieh, hsieh,* "slipper," "slipper." That is Ko Ai, the bell-girl, claiming her one shoe.

The Drum Tower, Ku Lou, stands by itself, enclosed by a railing, but a greedy keeper at a small door admitted me for some silver *mên-ch'ien*.

I passed through a dark, chilly vault and ascended a primitive stone staircase. This again is not a stair for human beings but for giants, each step being an exercise in climbing; and progress is extremely slow, like scaling a mountain from rock to rock. It reminds one of the dismal towers of the Middle Ages, in which Bluebeard imprisoned princesses. One reaches the top out of breath, with beating heart, and then suddenly stops, overwhelmed by the magnificent view.

Far below lies Peking, not a city of houses but a paradise of gardens. It is nothing like the horrid bird's-eye view of a European metropolis with chimneys and jagged projection. Everything in China that stands out against the sky is intended to be pleasing to the benevolent spirits in the spheres. The roofs, with their graceful, barge-like forms, seem to be floating softly through the sky, their corners ornamented with flying birds and swimming fishes. These exquisitely coloured houses do not stand side by side in long rows; they look more like scattered dwellings in a forest. Everywhere immense trees with gracefully expanding crowns rise above them like protectors. Everywhere, as far as one can see, these fatherly trees stand among the houses that nestle in their friendly shelter, only the big Boulevards cut with sharp angles straight across all these garden cities.

From this great distance the Coal Hill, with the



A LAKE IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

three temple-like pavilions on its summit, looks dwarfed and delicate. Something of the mystery of the Forbidden City is now revealed. It is far away and deep down, but its fairy-like palaces, with their roofs of brilliant yellow, are unveiled. From this distance a city of gold seems to lie behind that pink rampart. There are pavilions, cupolas, *t'ings*, pagodas slender as flowers, all covered by the imperial yellow that in the sunshine looks like gold.

The gardens are now visible, the wonderful gardens around the Winter Palace in the Forbidden City, with three large lotus-ponds which, seen from this great height and at this distance, lie like shining lakes of silver amid the gold of the roofs.

On an island in the ponds stands a wonderful white dragon—a white pagoda in Hindu style, like a costly pearl. It must be a temple for some god, but from here it looks like a shrine floating on the water luminous with lotuses. I seem to know that a very sacred Buddha dwells here. Farther, much farther away, I see beyond Peking a massive Hindu dragon, quaintly majestic between the lighter Chinese structures. Farther south three immense domes tower one above the other, dull cobalt blue in the lighter sky. I know them to be the domes of the Temple of Heaven, the most wonderful temple in the world.

I gaze on all these hues—yellow, green, blue—in eternal variety, rising like a harmonious hymn of colour from this immense town. I gaze at gardens, houses, palaces, long, straight lines of

solitary boulevards, like mystical geometrical figures across this beauty. I gaze on pink ramparts, glittering *p'ai-lous*, stately trees ; slender, delicate, flower-like pagodas blossom out, and over all broods the pure deep sky of intense Peking blue. This arching sky is the shining cupola of the immense temple of gods which is Peking.

THE VEILED BEAUTY

CHAPTER X

THE VEILED BEAUTY

ONE may dream of olden times in the regions of higher consciousness and allow oneself to become enthusiastic over the beauty of ancient architecture and antique monuments or classical wisdom; but we Westerns are, after all, too much in need of modern comfort, we are too firmly held in bondage by modern ways and all kinds of material things to be ever able to pass our inferior, lower existence in the ancient manner. An ordinary Chinese dinner now and then taken at a Chinese friend's house is torture; a night in a Chinese inn during a walking tour somewhere in the country is greater horror still. I even felt the shabby furniture and vile food in the Hôtel de Pékin as a heavy burden, notwithstanding the exceptional kindness and affability of the amiable, ever-smiling manager, an Italian, who seems to be absolutely unaware of the requisites of modern hotels.

After a month's retirement passed in solitary meditation the thing became too much for me, and I deserted again to the modern comfort of the Grand Hôtel des Wagons Lits. I even got intro-

duced to the Peking Club, merely for the sake of the sensation of sitting in a good European library, with a cosy fire, in a comfortable easy-chair.

To the traveller in China such a library of a large club is a real god-send. There is not a really well appointed library in any of the clubs of the Dutch Indies, with the exception of those in Batavia, but in China the English and Germans recognise how indispensable this is for their development. And one finds in the large clubs, besides a full supply of novels, a complete collection of scientific, political and sinological works.

I had made up my mind to meet as few Europeans as possible in Peking, and to see the city through my own eyes and from my own experience, avoiding as much as I was able the suggestion of the opinions of others—in fact, to isolate myself as much as I could. The solitude in the Hôtel de Pékin was particularly suitable for this purpose. But European life pulls one back irresistibly; one feels the need of comfort and society, even if from a distance, and finds oneself to be much more attached to modern Western civilisation than one expected. Yielding to this weakness, I moved back to the superior accommodation of the Wagons Lits Hotel; and many evenings found me, not at the crowded bar or in the billiard-rooms of the Peking Club but in its comfortable library.

The whole club, with its library, was destroyed by the fire of the Boxers. What admirable energy and love of literature, however, is shown by the

fact that within ten years the scanty and ever-flitting European community of Peking replaced it so splendidly! What an example to the large clubs in the Dutch Indies!

What one hears here and there from many Europeans in Peking, even from the "Legation" people, about the future of China is frequently absolute nonsense. Whenever railway loans cannot be forced through, offers from foreign syndicates are not accepted, claims applied for are not conceded, these people say that there is nothing good in China. They fulminate against all sorts of vicious conditions, especially the corruption of officials and the squeeze. All this is perfectly true, but they overlook one important matter, the most important—the modern spirit in the nation. This will overcome in the long run all obstacles, and is irresistibly impelling China towards complete reform and full development.

I have heard people say the strangest things about Peking and its magnificent buildings, temples and monuments. Tourists and residents in Peking have visited the Lama Temple, the "Yung-ho Kung," and "do not think anything of it," even call it "a dirty pile." They depreciate in the same way other creations of wisdom and beauty, which they pass by without understanding. They see the outer dirt and vulgarity, but the core of beauty remains concealed from them. I heard scarcely anything about the Lama Temple but a reference to the shabby begging monks at the gates; and most of the visitors who happened to attend a

morning or evening service think the music and singing horrible.

That besides these wretched mendicant friars there are others who pass their life in prayer and meditation; that there is in this temple a library of incalculable philosophical value, full of rare works on exoteric and esoteric Buddhism—all this they do not consider. Nor do they dream it possible that the so-called *huo˙ fo,* the "Living Buddha," who dwells there invisible to the outer world, might be a spiritually advanced being, highly developed by some mystical initiation. Nor do they know that Eastern music possesses more delicate shades and finer gradations of sound and vibration than the whole and half notes of our Western scales. The consequence is that the unpractised or shallow Western, unable to discern these more subtle differences of tone and more finely divided vibrations, declares Eastern music to be discordant and unbearable. Nor does such a one understand that Eastern orchestras, as, for example, the Javanese *gamelang,* use different pitches and rhythms for the morning, daytime, evening, or night, because the vibrations of the ether also differ. After all, is this not the case with all beauty, be it that of line, colour, or sound? In one man it excites a thrill of higher self-consciousness, stirring the most subtle regions of his soul. Another does not respond at all, because the still coarse chords of his self-consciousness cannot vibrate with these more delicate vibrations, and this beauty leaves him absolutely untouched.

The Veiled Beauty

Once I made an experiment in the Hôtel des Wagons Lits. In the morning and evening pedlars come to the Hall of the hotel to exhibit all sorts of curios. The vast majority of these curios are not worth looking at; they are modern trash, made in Germany or England after Chinese models, or of modern Chinese origin, expressly made for sale to foreign barbarians.

Brand-new porcelain from Ching-tê Chên and Kiukiang or elsewhere is offered to the foreigner as ancient K'ang Hsi or Ch'ien Lung. Brand-new horrors from the Yang Tien Li factory are sold as very old Peking cloisonné. There is rarely any art in these, but now and then some genuine good things get accidentally mixed up with them. The curious fact is that the bulk of the tourists who look at these things day after day never discern the things of beauty, but leave them to buy the trash.

So once there was exhibited in the Hall among all this coarse lot a wonderfully fine black bronze teapot. I saw it as soon as I came in, or rather it was as if some sweet, soft sound called to me. A simple little teapot it was, nothing more; but pure in contour, full of grace and sensibility, the handle delicately bent, the spout like the curve of a flower stalk, as if a wealth of kindness and happiness had been in the soul of the man who made it. It was so sincere, the quaint little thing, among all this dull, cold rubbish, it seemed to be appealing to me with its refined voice. I recognised it at once as "a thing of beauty, a joy for ever."

I wanted to buy it immediately at any price, but a sort of cruel curiosity, of which I was ashamed later on, impelled me to make an experiment. I left it there for a week, and every morning went to see whether the visitors at the hotel had heard what it said. How often was it taken up, or moved! Once I saw the delicate brittle little beauty in a pair of huge, red, hairy hands, and I felt a sharp pang of jealous pain as if it were desecration, until happily it was put down again. Nobody saw it, nobody heard it, nobody bought it.

Then one morning I took it very carefully in my hands and bought it for a trifle from the pedlar, who did not realise its value and had not been able to dispose of it. And in my room I sat down admiring it, and feeling the soul of the artist who made it centuries ago.

I relate this as a proof of how little the bulk of Westerns understand the Chinese art. The same thing happened with drawings and paintings on silk. What is sold in ordinary shops and by pedlars at the hotel is very vulgar and common stuff, coarse and tasteless. But sometimes the work of a real artist is found accidentally among these also. It happened that one of those hawkers, to whom I had given a special order to look for it, arrived one day with a sort of kakemono, a painting on silk, that he unrolled suddenly before my delighted eyes like an apotheosis of colour. It was a vision of fairy phœnixes with immense fan-tails, peacocks, pheasants, parrots, all sorts of wonderful birds superbly drawn on a ground of deep brown.

A glowing dream it was of the most brilliant and delicate hues, incredibly beautiful, so that I thought for the moment I was the victim of a delusion. The pedlar saw from the surprise in my eyes that I wanted it and named an exorbitant price that I could not afford. The purchase was therefore not completed, and he put the masterpiece in his showcase among a heap of modern vulgar scrolls.

The glorious old masterpiece was unrolled and examined on various occasions, while I looked on from a corner of the hall with beating heart and lively apprehension. This went on for a month. Then the pedlar, who was short of cash, gave in, and I got the superb kakemono for comparatively few dollars. An expert, one of my Chinese friends, to whom I showed it afterwards, was stricken dumb by it and attributed it to a very famous painter who lived at the beginning of the Ming dynasty. He assured me that if my not over-clever pedlar had hung the scroll and displayed it against the wall instead of keeping it rolled up, one of the high mandarins who from time to time visit the hotel would have recognised it and bought it for a considerable sum. These facts strengthened still more my conviction that thousands of Westerns pass by wonders of Eastern beauty with blinded eyes. One may come home full of fiery and violent enthusiasm over a magnificent temple or some famous building, and meet others who visited the same thing a day ago but " saw nothing in it."

That is why all books on the East, including those on Peking, may be true and at the same

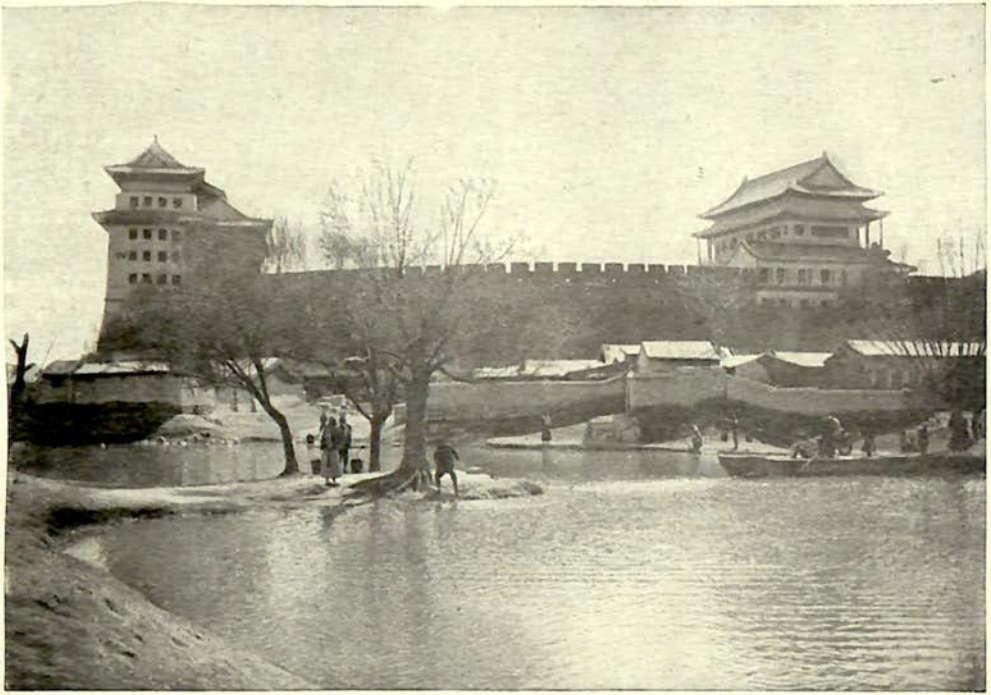
time untrue. Not only the writer but the reader must be considered. The Yellow Temple, the Lama Temple, the Pai-Yün monastery, the Temple of the Five Pagodas, and so many others, are to one dirty and filthy, full of idols and wretched shabby monks, and to another wonders of devotional art, where pious priests are meditating in the midst of wisdom and beauty. I am therefore not astonished to find that so few inhabitants and visitors are struck by the exalted symbolism of the Forbidden City. Is not this Chinese nation a magnificent symbol in itself? The great majority of the world outside looks upon it as filthy, stupid, and uncivilised; it has suffered defeat after defeat, suffered all that contempt, hatred, misunderstanding and disdain could inflict by bitterness and sourness; it has invoked disaster after disaster by fossilised conservatism, stupid superstition, and tyranny; this people, scourged for decades at a stretch by lash after lash, robbed of one harbour after another, has sunk from humiliation to deeper humiliation. And yet it has in its inmost heart the Forbidden City, whose roseate ramparts exclude the outer world from its sacred mystery. How often have I felt a hitherto unknown strength, an inexpressible joy, standing before those red walls, the sun shining on the splendid yellow tiles, all light and glory, thinking that all might be destroyed if only the Forbidden City kept its mystery inviolate.

I believe this symbol to be the most beautiful I found in Peking, more exalted even than the beauty of architecture, temple and monument.

But all these things are only revealed to those who can feel their subtle vibrations and can respond.

Therefore this book on Peking is a lie, a pose, a dream, an affectation, a fancy that learned diplomats and sinologues will laugh at; but it is, at the same time, a revelation that Peking bestowed upon me. Not a word in it is fiction, no view a delusion, but all is luminous clearness to those who can see by the spirit in which shines the light of truth.

THE YELLOW TEMPLE



VIEW OF PEKING FROM OUTSIDE.

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CHAPTER XI

THE YELLOW TEMPLE

If one glances back upon Peking after having passed into the country through An-ting Mên, the view is as terrible as that from any other gate. The gigantic grey mass of walls, grim and relentless, reminds one by its grandeur of a primeval scriptural city of Nebuchadnezzar or the Queen of Sheba. I saw it I do not know how often, and on each occasion the illusion of olden times came over me. It is as if Peking had remained petrified in the course of the ages, and time itself paused around it. A rumbling rickshaw took me to the An-ting Gate. There I found the meek little donkeys standing at the foot of the high wall, and I hired one for a couple of *mao-ch'ien* to carry me to the Huang Ssŭ, the Yellow Temple. It is quite part of the fitness of things, entirely Pekingese, homely but pompous, to ride a shabby little ass in the attitude of a Roman Consul in his triumph. The way leads first across a bridge, then through a kind of suburb of clay cottages, foul and filthy, over an uneven, sloping little road, and at last

the country is open to view, with spacious horizons receding into the far distance.

It is a lonely grey field, barren as a desert. In the distance I saw great trees and yellow roofs. The Yellow Temple must be somewhere about there.

In this Yellow Temple are buried the garments of a holy Tashi lama who came as an ambassador from Thibet to Peking. It was the Lama Panchan Bogdo from Tashi Lumpo, who died of small-pox in 1870. The ashes of his cremated corpse were sent to Thibet, but over his clothes the artist-Emperor, Ch'ien Lung, erected a *Stûpa* in old Hindu style, a mausoleum of marble and gold.

After half an hour's jogging on the placid, ear-flapping little donkey, I beheld the glimmer of the yellow tiles on the temple, and indistinctly I saw it rising up against the sky like a mysterious white flower with a golden crown. A high wall surrounds the temple. I knocked at a small gate. The old lama priest who opened was not such a dirty, degenerate type of beggar as the guides and gate-keepers of the Lama Temple, Yung-ho Kung, in Peking. I was lucky this time; he looked calm and composed in his yellow frock.

I saluted him in Chinese with the formula "Na-mo-O-mi-t'o-fo": Namo Amitâbha, and told him that I had come to see the *Stûpa* of the Tashi lama. He conducted me across a court surrounded by walls, through another gate, another court, and a third door, where lamas as dirty as those of the Lama Temple were begging for *mên*

ch'ien. He then took me into another yard surrounded by walls with very large trees, where I again felt unmistakably the peculiar ethereal thrills as I felt them once before in the Yung-ho Kung. My head seemed to become clearer and fresher, as if mists were vanishing; I seemed to be floating instead of walking. This sensation cannot be described to those who have never been affected by the vibrations in very sacred temples, where numerous mystic *mantras* continually purify the astral atmosphere.

It made me pause. On my right I saw a very ancient temple of grey wood, with faded but magnificent colours, yellow, blue, and green, full of cracks and rifts. It was already leaning and seemed about to fall. It is only a very, very old temple, and why should the sight of it bring tears into my eyes? What is there in this decrepit building to affect me? Have I seen it before—in a dream, or in a previous life?

The decayed old temple stands in this quiet court like a beautiful and holy shrine. It is surrounded by an ethereal atmosphere of the most subtle vibrations, only discerned in the higher regions by the most delicate consciousness of the soul.

The lama looked at me without a word, and I think he understood that there was some relation between the temple and myself; but he signed to me to go through another gate, into another court, also surrounded by walls, and planted with fine old firs.

The priest took me through a white *p'ai lou* to

a monument of dazzling whiteness, rising up like a solemn prayer on stone. It affected me like a quiet, pure requiem too sacred to be uttered in sound; unheard music from higher regions more beautiful than music become audible, music vibrating not in the ears but through the higher regions of the soul.

A wonderful peace sank into me, a stillness too intense in its purity to be long endured.

Four marble columns at the four points of the compass stand round the *Stûpa,* which surmounts an octagonal base on a richly ornamented wall. Above a blunt cone with sublime images of the Buddha in relief, resting on a terrace of exceedingly fine ornaments, rises a column. It is a Hindu *toran* of thirteen segments surrounded by a golden dome stretching up to the sky like a mystical flower. The first impression is of white, unstained snowy white. It is a wonder, this stainless prayer in marble in the open air, undisturbed by rain or storms. Like this *toran* is the mystical lotus-flower, to which no dust adheres, of which nothing unclean can take hold, the whiteness of which is ever preserved by its inner purity.

It is something quite unexpected to see this snowy whiteness after those old, decayed walls and gates, and the ancient temple in its silent court with the motionless firs. This whiteness under the golden dome impresses one as if it remained so by its own unassailable essence. It is so wonderfully and strangely white, as if there dwelt in it

some mystical power, and this monument of stone were in reality a living being.

When I approached, slowly recovering from the first impression, I began to notice details. The entire monument is covered with bas-reliefs of the highest art. Complete historical scenes are sculptured in relief, like those on the sacred Borobodoer on Java, but these are much finer because the material, the noblest marble, is finer. There is the Tashi Lama, whose garments are buried here, beset by enemies eager to destroy him. But as was the case with the Buddha Śākyamuni fighting against Māra, all the weapons hurled at him fell at his feet like so many offerings, changed into flowers. There is also represented the death of the Tashi Lama, showing all Nature overcome by grief, lions weeping by his side. Many other scenes from his holy life are sculptured, amongst them his birth, when he descends from heaven on a white elephant. Everything is kept in severe style, with ornaments of ancient Hindu art, that petrified the passing gesture into an indestructible monument and made the transient eternal.

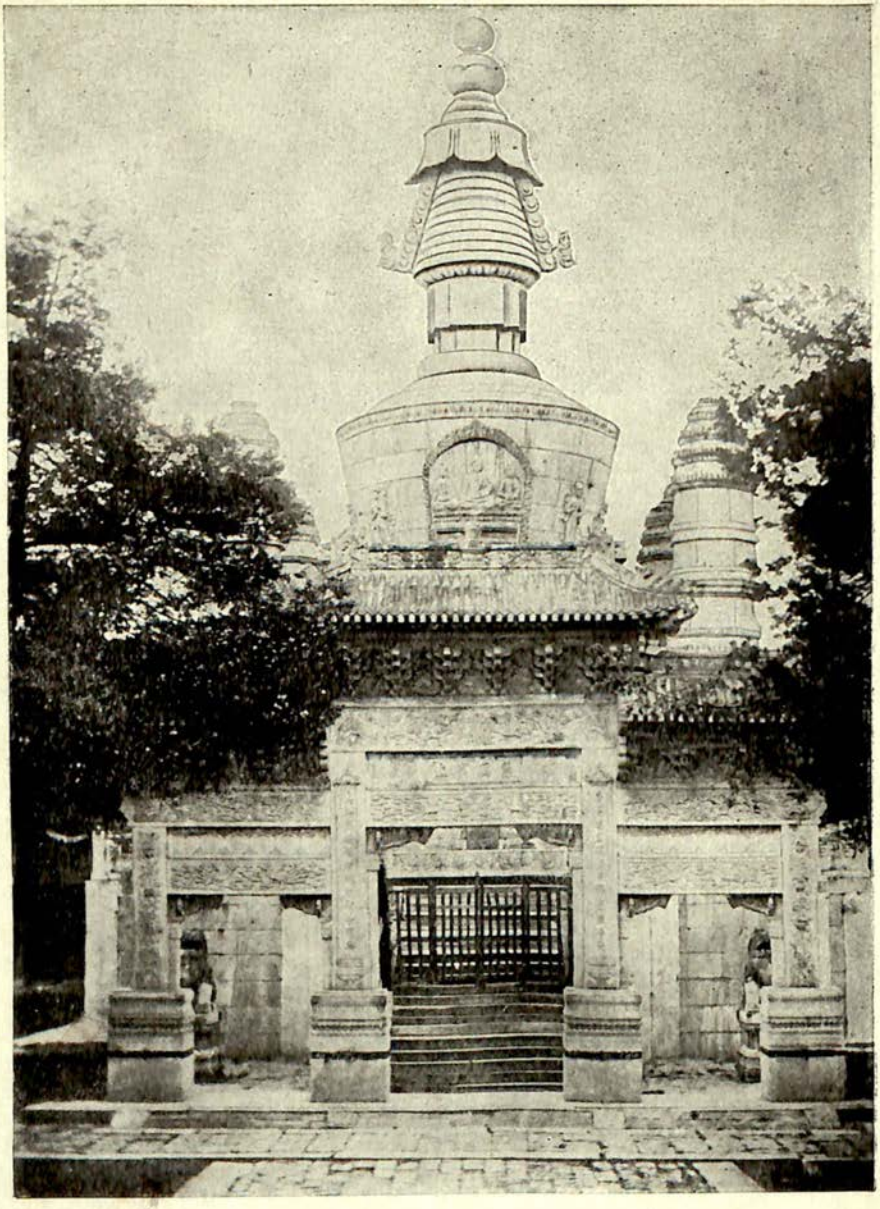
On the marble terrace at the bottom appears a whole creation of phœnixes soaring in white clouds, sacred dragons cleaving their way through the waters of the sea, mystical *ch'i-lins*, lions, serpents, and wonderful flowers.

Higher, in niches on the great cone, sit Buddhas upon large lotus-flowers in the posture of meditation, transcending the delusions of the ephemeral and entering into the heart of eternity.

On the top of the slender column that rests like a flower on the blunt cone glitters the golden dome, like a sun of glory on the stainless marble.

I asked the lama how it was possible that the monument could remain so clean and pure. He assured me that though the foot was swept the upper parts remained clean without attention. The rains could not harm it, he said, they purified it. It was sacred marble. No power of Nature could injure it; on the contrary, they protected it. Only in 1900, at the time of the great invasion of the Barbarians, after the Boxer Rebellion, Japanese soldiers came here and wantonly knocked off the heads from statues and damaged bas-reliefs with the butt-ends of their rifles. The priest took me round to the back and showed me the atrocious wanton destruction inflicted on this sacred monument. Happily only a small part of the detail was destroyed by this act of vandalism. The priest also told me that there remains a sacred emanation from the garments once worn by the dead Tashi Lama. This mystical influence, he asserted, pervaded the marble; hence the wonderful white purity it retained. In the Tashi Lama is incarnated the Boddhisattva Avalōkitēśvara, who is known in China by the mellifluous name of Kuan Yin.

It really seemed that a mystical influence surrounded this still and sacred spot; silent as if the atmosphere itself watched with bated breath. It was with reluctance that I left all this beauty. Might I always gaze on this snowy whiteness, always look up to these silent Buddhas! Might



STÛPA IN THE YELLOW TEMPLE : HUANG SSŬ.

To face p. 185.

I know nothing beyond this clear autumnal sky, these peaceful firs, this white marble *Stûpa!*

But time passes, hours hasten by, the illusion of phenomena changes incessantly before my eyes; nothing remains still in this restless existence.

I walked behind the aged priest across the still court, and the little door was again opened for me. I looked back for the last time. Farewell, beautiful and sacred spot!

The lama talked on. He asked me whether I should like to see the three great Buddhas in the temple.

I declined; I was too tired. He told me that less than a year ago the Dalai Lama from Lhassa in Thibet lived in this Yellow Temple, when he came to Peking to negotiate with the Government.

That must have been an interesting experience, for these priests in the Huang Ssŭ to visit all these holy men from Thibet, and among them the Dalai Lama, in whom a Buddha is incarnated. I did not pay much attention to the story. My thoughts were still too far away, dwelling in the white region of the *Stûpa*. We had now reached the end. I desired to say goodbye to the lama and thank him, but he inquired whether I had seen all I wanted to see, and if I were satisfied. All at once I remembered something I had read in some book which spoke of the dead lamas in the temples and their ashes. Should I be allowed to see the dead priests and the hall where their ashes were kept? I fancied that this would not be so fatiguing as looking at the three great Buddhas in the temple.

The lama smiled in astonishment. "Most visitors do not ask that; it is not nice to look at," he said. "It is better not." But though I knew not why, I felt impelled to see this hall of ashes.

Along narrow lanes and sidepaths the lama conducted me outside the compound of temples to a barn open at one side. It was dark and had a disagreeable smell. A number of curious cupboards stood about, some very small. They were placed there without any order, as if they were rubbish, useless things thrown anyhow into a lumber-room. I did not quite understand why the lama brought me here, for I wanted to see the dead priests.

"Where are the deceased?" I inquired.

In silence the lama pointed to the small cupboards. "What? In there . . . the dead lamas?" I asked, feeling a shudder pass through me.

"Their bodies," said the priest quietly with a very significant gesture. I understood. Their bodies; that is all. I remembered now what I had read. The dead lamas are placed for a time in a stooping attitude in those cupboards, closely shut in until all the life *prana* has left them; then they are cremated.

Yes, those cupboards contained stooping corpses. In the very small ones were those of child priests such as I had seen in the Yung-ho Kung. There is no reason for disturbance . . . they themselves are not here, only the bodies in which they had dwelt during one incarnation . . . nothing else.

Then the priest took me to an open yard, a little farther away, full of primitive stone fireplaces and an abundance of ashes. "Here the bodies are cremated," he said quietly. I understood; only the bodies. Silently he signed me to go on again.

We now entered a very large hall, more like a shed, with a rough wooden floor, very plain and simple. There were a few vases for offerings and some incense-burners on a table. Nothing more was to be seen. Then I observed some little yellow bags hanging on the walls, something like the bags in which Easter eggs are put in Europe, but these are rather larger. They hung in orderly rows. I looked at them more closely and found on each bag a formula in Thibetan and a name in Chinese.

I understood. This is what was left of the lamas, or, rather, of the bodies in which the lamas used to dwell. Some ashes, some charred bones.

I noticed now that there was another yellow-robed priest in the hall. Perhaps the caretaker or the watchman. He was a very old man, very much bent. I inquired his age in the most civil Chinese terms, "*kao shou*"—"your high, long life?" And he answered modestly, as Chinese etiquette requires, "I have passed uselessly through eighty-five years."

Then I asked him whether there really are dead lamas in those little bags; I knew better, but I spoke thus to hear what he would say.

"The bodies," he quietly replied, "a little of

their dust." Then, without any affectation, simply and calmly, " Before long there will probably hang here something of my body also."

The other lama looked at me with a gentle smile.

THE TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS AND THE HALL OF THE CLASSICS

CHAPTER XII

THE TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS AND THE HALL OF THE CLASSICS

AFTER the rich ornamentation of so many magnificent temples and monuments it affords a pleasant surprise to visit the sober simplicity of the *Kuo Tzŭ Chien,* the Temple of the Sage of the Empire, opposite the large Lama Temple at the end of the Ha-ta Mên Street.

For me this pilgrimage to the Soul-tablet of Confucius was of special importance. Had I not ventured to translate his simple, serene doctrine for the first time into my own glorious mother-tongue, editing it in such a way that not only the scholar but also the ignorant might take in his wisdom? Until then his doctrine had been kept at an immeasurable distance from the unlearned by official professors, as so-called science.

It was peaceful and sacred work, this rendering in my own language the wisdom about mankind that over two thousand years ago had gone forth from the Great One. Perhaps, therefore, it may not be considered too childish that on this pilgrimage I took a copy of my translation with me and laid it for a moment before his tablet.

Only a short time before my visit to this temple I had read in Chêng-gang Lu's article in the *London and China Express*: "During the last two thousand five hundred years we in China have worked on the accumulated capital of our ancestors, whose illustrious reminiscences and immortal perfections have been saved for us by the prescience and wisdom of our great sage Confucius. Without Confucius, the far East, China, Korea, Annam, and even the now powerful Japan, would have sunk into the lowest depths of barbarism."

In the present work I cannot expatiate upon the enormous influence of Confucius on the spiritual life of China; that would fill a book by itself. I must be allowed to refer the reader to special works on that subject, my own amongst them.

I expected to find the most brilliant of all the magnificent temples erected to the memory of the Sage whose great mind penetrated that of the entire nation for centuries after centuries, and whose commandments were sacred to dynasty after dynasty. But the greatest honour that could have been rendered to him is that the *Kuo Tzŭ Chien*, like his own serene wisdom, is plain, simple, and severe.

It is not possible that this should be accidental. The artist and philosopher who had to choose the ornamentation for Confucius's tablet must have been a person permeated by the essentials of his doctrine. It is surrounded by peace and rest, quiet repose without pomp or splendour, in accordance with the sublime simplicity of his wisdom.

One passes through a little door in the wall of

the temple, and enters a quiet courtyard full of trees.

I had only seen such trees in a dream, or sometimes in pictures of the primitives of the beginning of the Middle Ages, who retained in their delicate mystical art the memory of dream-wanderings in astral regions. These trees were planted a thousand years ago, under the Sung dynasty. The Chinese call them *Sung-shu* (sung-trees) and they are the oldest trees in Peking. I believe they are thuyas. They are very, very old, their branches twisted, their trunks deeply wrinkled, but they are stately and dignified, like ancient sages.

It is as if these apparently lifeless (for nothing is really lifeless, and dead matter does not exist), these decrepit, worn-out trees have taken in some of the cosmic philosophy of Confucius. On entering this quiet court one feels as if the great basic thoughts of the sage stand there before one.

All is old, calm, wise, simple, and pious. No better or fitter ornament than this court would have been possible for the grand Master of the Empire.

Passing beneath the wide foliage I felt the reverence that one feels under the worshipping arches of a cathedral. My book in my hand, I wandered in this quiet court, in the temple of the dead master K'ung, I, a disciple from far foreign lands.

To the right and left of a large wooden gate (not the one through which we entered), under an arched vault, are ten curious old stones, about three feet high. They look like moulds for mortars,

but they are the old, holy drums of the Chou dynasty. They are two thousand seven hundred years old, and were placed here six hundred years ago by Kuo Shou-Chêng, the famous minister of Kublai Khan, the Tartar usurper. They were discovered in the beginning of the seventh century, half buried, somewhere near Fêng-hsiang Fu in the province of Shensi. Looking closer, I observed on each of the ten drums an inscription in stately old-fashioned characters. I remembered that those inscriptions were verses by the poet Ch'êng Wang (1105-79 B.C.), who engraved his odes upon these drums to commemorate a remarkable imperial hunting and fishing excursion.

It was a striking sensation to see these verses sanctified, because imperishable, in this quiet court with trees over a thousand years old; engraved in drums nearly thirty centuries ago. I felt quite unworthy in my modern dress, with my modern book, in this environment of primeval ages. It seemed sacrilegious.

I noticed now nothing but stone monuments with engraved inscriptions under pavilions of brilliantly yellow roofs—the imperial yellow tiles again. These are monuments relating to the acts of the great wise Emperors K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), Yung Chêng (1725-35), and Ch'ien Lung (1736-95). The monuments were erected to announce to the spirit of the Great Master any important fact that might affect the weal of the empire. It is surely very remarkable, and as far as I know, a solitary case in the history of the world, that not

a deity has been worshipped as the example of posterity of both emperors and people, but a sage who never was deified in the proper sense of the word and who, although a saint, always remained human.

Not a great warrior or conqueror but a sage is the great moral and political example, and the object of deepest devotion. And this fact implies so much that it contains the most sublime possibilities of wisdom, beauty, and justice for China's future. A nation which considers the highest good, not the brutal power of some tyrant, not mere kingship, but wisdom, and which takes as example a sage, such a nation may become the leader of civilisation when once the difficulties and struggles of its reform are over.

It is part of the beauty of the worship of Confucius that his wisdom not only reveals the loftiest ideas, but is cast in so fine a literary form; thus in China the highest wisdom is at the same time the highest literature. What we call literature, as far as fiction is concerned, is in China simply *Hsiao shuo,* meaning "small talk." In China only supreme wisdom in superb literary form is called literature. No translation can make it possible to realise what sublime literature was the wisdom of Confucius, as conveyed to us by the original Chinese text, with its wonderful ideographic characters.

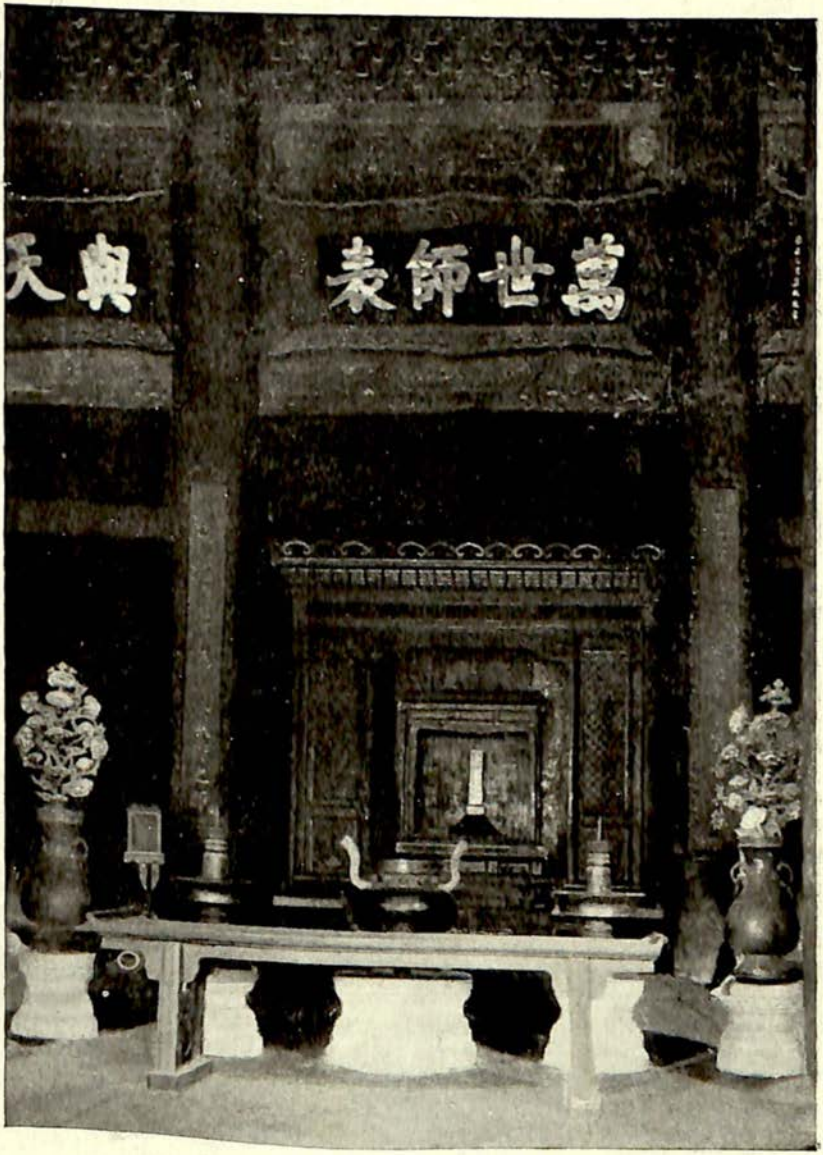
I went on under the old sung-trees and came at last to the temple structure, the outside of which is like those sacred to the Buddhas, but the

inside of striking simplicity. The roof is a square mosaic, gold and green; the many wooden pillars are red. The first thing noticeable is a red wooden niche draped in imperial yellow cloth, between two pillars at the back of a square recess in the wall; it is touching by reason of its plainness. In this niche stands the simple wooden soul-tablet of Confucius[1] lacquered in vermilion. On it are six golden characters, in Chinese and Manchu: "Seat of the soul of the most holy Master K'ung" ("*Chih Shêng Shih K'ung Shên Wei*"). Over the recess is written in large characters: "*Wan Shih Shih Piao*" ("The example of the Masters of ten thousand centuries").

I have seen many soul-tablets on altars, richly ornamented, brilliantly decorated; but none of them impressed me so much as this plain one, about three feet high and six inches wide, on a pedestal of two feet. Those six golden characters convey more than the finest ornament. The four above were put there by the Emperor K'ang Hsi himself, the literary emperor, who applied the imperial brush with his own hand.

In front of the niche on stands of white marble are the Wu Kung of old bronze, the five offerings, two vases, two candelabra and an incense-burner, and behind these a sacrificial tablet for the offer-

[1] The so-called soul-tablet is supposed to contain some part of the soul of the deceased. In each Chinese house the ancestral soul-tablet is placed on an altar and worshipped there. Particulars may be found in scientific works such as Prof. J. J. M. de Groot's "The Religious System of China."



SOUL TABLET OF CONFUCIUS.

To face p. 196.

ings. On certain very important occasions even an entire bull was immolated here.

Master K'ung was worthy of the devotion of hundreds of millions during centuries, if only for these texts, enunciated hundreds of years before the Christ revealed himself in Jesus: "All men within the four seas are brethren," and "What you do not desire done unto you, do it not unto others."

I stood in front of that tablet with bowed head and reverent heart, and dedicated thoughts of gratitude and homage to the Great Master. I offered the same pious thoughts to all the other great teachers of humanity, Plato, Jesus, Sakyamuni, and others, who were sent forth in the particular age in which they were incarnated to spread in the world's obscurity whatever they might of the Great Illumination.

I wandered for some time through the temple hall on the soft mattings of areca-palm leaves that covered the floor. I saw other tablets, among them those of Mêng Tzŭ (Mencius) and Tsêng Tzŭ. I saw also the imperial seal of K'ang Hsi, which sets forth that he wrote the four characters sanctified by his brush in the twenty-fourth year of his reign (1685), and inscriptions on other pillars by various emperors—each succeeding emperor wished to testify to his veneration for the great sage; but each time I returned to the simple red tablet sacred to his grand soul. Do not think, my European brethren, that the spirit of the great Master K'ung will ever be expelled from the Chinese nation,

although modern things have been introduced, modern ideas hover over the Chinese soul, reforms break through victoriously, driving out the spirits of obscurity, superstition, and ignorance. He revealed the essence of truth; a divine gift, not for the ages but for eternity, even although he gave with it a good deal of now superfluous speculation on a ceremonial that at his time was indispensable. External things will change, new currents of thought will pass through the Chinese brain; windows giving an outlook into a new future have been blown open. But the wisdom of Teacher K'ung in its essence, divested of what is temporal and perishable, will be treasured by the Chinese people as its indestructible and highest good.

Such will also be the case with the sublime literature, the fair form in which this wisdom is cast. This will remain the highest good for modern reformed China, not the power given by money, battleships, and guns. In the ages that will dawn China will be able to take the lead of the great civilised world-powers by spiritual, but not by physical, force. She must see to it that, as in the times of the good Teacher K'ung, her spiritual possessions are dearer to her than any material ones. A nation which loves and worships wisdom and literature above all is the nation of the future, if only the love for Confucius, the inner, not the external love, continues to inspire it, unimpaired by the unavoidable clash with the modern spirit.

I went away reluctantly from the simple grandeur

of the Temple of Confucius and the quiet court of ancient trees.

A doorkeeper pointed out the tablets of many disciples and pupils of the Master in the adjoining buildings. They did not especially touch me, but one thing that I saw appealed to me.

It was that at the east side were placed the tablets of disciples who had excelled in virtue, at the west side those who had shone in science.

In this arrangement lies much wisdom: virtue distinguished from science and virtue the higher, in the place of honour.

The examination halls for those who wished to graduate as Doctor (*Chin-shih*) of Literature or Philosophy used to be here. The names of these doctors are all recorded on stone tablets. Some date from the Mongol period (1260-1368).

These classical examinations for Hsiu-ts'ai, Chü-jên and Chin-shih, now all abolished, have been too much disparaged. High literature was the one saving requirement for those who desired to become mandarins—that is, officials. The principle was undoubtedly noble, although its application degenerated. One finds in all politico-philosophical systems, as in that of Plato, this principle that only the wise are able to rule the people.

It was a very courageous action of Emperor Kuang Hsü to assail in 1898 an ancient and sacred custom of thousands of years by abolishing the classical essay as the chief subject of the State examinations. And the Empress Tz'ŭ-hsi must have felt how irresistibly the spirit of the ages

was impelling her; for on August 29, 1901, a date of incalculable importance in the history of the world, she confirmed by imperial decree "the abolition of essays on Chinese classics in the examinations for literary degrees, and the substitution of essays and articles on modern matters, Western laws, or political economy. This same rule to be followed in the examination of candidates for official posts."

Yet the spirit of the great Teacher will not be lost, but will rather permeate the Western ideas now passing through the Chinese national mind.

It is much more solemn and tragic to pass through this temple Kuo Tzŭ Chien now than it was fifteen years ago. For then the old still stood rigid as a fossil in the centuries, without motion or sound. Now the new, young ideas blow against it, and a host of modern thoughts dispels the quietude of ancient sacred courts with a great shout of revolution. But when I left the temple modernity seemed still remote and the ages appeared to stay their course.

Near the Kuo Tzŭ Chien, consecrated to Confucius, is the so-called Hall of Classics, in Chinese *P'i-yung Kung* (the Hall of Sublime Harmony). It is not one palace but a group of temple-like halls, in a large garden. In this palace the texts of Chinese classics are kept engraved on stone tables. The central hall is a wonderful sanctuary, where the wise emperor piously meditated in solitude on the wisdom of these classics, explaining them subsequently to high officials.

HALL OF THE CLASSICS, P'I-YUNG KUNG.

To face p. 200.

The Temple of Confucius

Most tourists and even most sinologues pass through this Hall of the Classics, admire its architecture and pore over the texts, without the faintest idea of its great importance.

Is it not a noble act to preserve the wisdom of an empire engraved on two hundred stone tables in a palace of beauty, where the emperor—not a tyrant but a sage—comes to meditate in a lonely hall, afterwards revealing to his ministers that wisdom by which the nation shall be ruled?

It is unnecessary to say that in the course of centuries this wisdom degenerates into dead formalism; that in later times these emperors were no longer what Yao and Shun were, sages inspired by higher powers. I refer here only to the symbol, which is eternal and true beyond all changing times.

Nor ought it to be forgotten that what was highest law and highest truth in remote centuries many thousand years ago, when the race was in its bloom, will also become law and truth in the far future when a new and superior race arises. What is now old and decayed will be young and new once more. The epoch of materialism will pass, the world will no longer be possessed by the cursed delusion of egotism, selfishness, and sensuousness. Future days will be pregnant with the spiritual beauty of which the conception is already initiated. Then wisdom will once more hold its imperial sway over humanity, blossoming forth in beauty, as it did in the grey antiquity of China.

As in the height one may see a landscape illu-

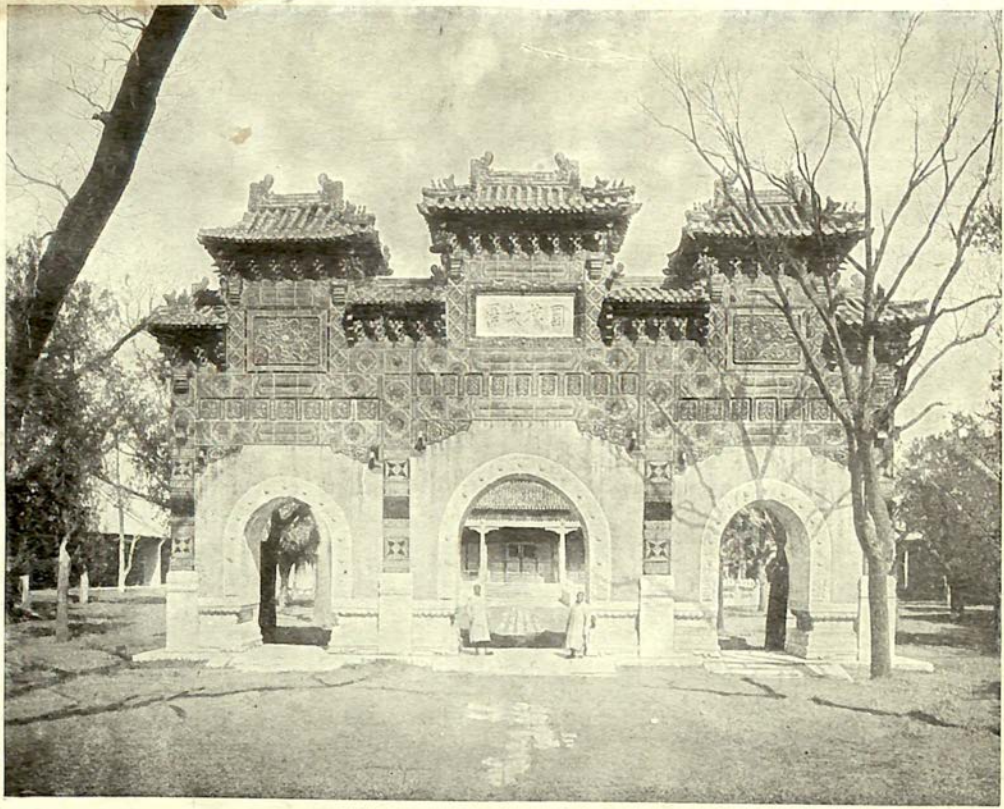
minated by a flash of lightning, I saw this by one of the intuitions that thrill through us from higher regions when I entered the Hall of Sublime Harmony and walked by the stone tables. The symbol of these holy walls contains more than the dead past of China: the living future of all humanity will arise from them.

Through an old time-worn wooden door I passed, as in the temple of Confucius, into a garden court containing trees centuries old. The soil was soft and yellow as it is in autumn, the colour of things decayed long ago. Suddenly a vivid melody resounds from this dead old transient mass; a glorious *p'ai-lou* of marble and porcelain with three arches, red, white, and yellow, lifts its song to the sky, filling the soul with joy, as if the immortality of life were revealed to it.

This *p'ai-lou* is certainly the greatest wonder of all the stately arches of honour in Peking. In the midst of all the old decrepit ornamentation of the antique palace, behind these churchyard trees, wrinkled by the centuries, from the dull stillness of sombre hues, this miraculous *p'ai-lou* shouts its joy into the blue sky, a gleam of eternal youth, of stainless beauty unassailable through the ages.

Here is repeated the miracle of the Yellow Temple, Huang Ssŭ. Invulnerable to weather, wind and rain, this shining monument of marble and faience remains pure and spotless through the centuries.

The base of this massive but graceful structure is of white marble, as are its three arches. It is



P'AI-LOU IN THE HALL OF THE CLASSICS.

To face p. 303.

marble of the same unreal whiteness as that of the Stûpa above the garments of the dead Tashi Lama. These white arches are supported by walls of vermilion stucco, above which rises the *p'ai-lou*, a miracle of square and circular yellow and green porcelain tiles, richly ornamented with leaves, lotuses, and dragons. It is covered by three *t'ing* roofs, with the same yellow tiles as those in the Forbidden City. There are only four colours, white, vermilion, green and yellow, but mingled so harmoniously that they create a solemn yet joyous hymn of colour that soars into the sky like a Hosanna. I was never so much affected by vibrations of colour, like chords of music, as I was in Peking; and in the midst of the end of all things this *p'ai-lou* sings of eternal life.

Passing through the arch of honour, I found myself in front of a temple structure surrounded by a lake, enclosed by a balustrade of white marble. Four small bridges lead to four principal entrances, opening to the four points of the compass.

This is the temple where the emperor used to meditate in deepest concentration of thought. The calm pond around it was a symbol of isolation, of complete severance from the world. It is a stately square building on columns, with a square *t'ing* roof, surmounted by a large gilt ball. Beneath the upper roof and separated from it by a small terrace projects a second roof of the same *t'ing* form; underneath a veranda runs along the four sides, each of which has seven pairs of folding doors with finely-carved panels.

On entering I found this hall of meditation, as I expected, without ornaments. No wealth of altars and shrines; emptiness and silence; nothing that might distract. Only in the centre of the hall a stately throne with steps leading to the seat; behind it a large screen of five panels in the shape of five mountains. It is the well-known screen of the five mountains symbolising degrees of initiation. In front of the throne stands a table. The throne is decorated with the imperial dragons with five paws. Here the symbol has also a profound meaning. The emperor, the sage, is, it is true, enthroned, but without pomp or display, in an empty hall cut off from the outer world by the lake and by the seven doors. Here the emperor-sage meditates on God, according to whose laws he governs his immense empire, rules over hundreds of millions of human beings.

This lonely, empty hall is now covered with dust, the fine, penetrating dust of Peking, which is now and then blown across from the Gobi desert by whirlwinds from the north, and which on rare occasions darkens the pure blue sky. It looks as if nothing were ever dusted or cleaned here, as if everything must remain as it is. The fine desert sand is powdered over everything on the throne and the screen, it gives a dull deep colour to the red-lacquered wood with golden ornaments, and I felt as if I were even walking on sand, although there was matting beneath the dust.

For years and years no emperor has meditated here, not even the tragic Kuang Hsü, who was

imprisoned by his aunt, the dowager empress, on an island in the lotus-pond of the Forbidden City, like a naughty child, yet one who by divine intuition felt in his soul the dawn of modern ages in China. Nor is it very probable that within the next hundred years an emperor will ever meditate here. He will be too busy with the exact science of the West, with Western politics, economics, and sociology. It will be centuries before China realises again that not science but wisdom rules the world.

I left the hall again on the north side by the marble bridge across the pond, deeply impressed by what I had seen. There I noticed a large round sundial on a stone pedestal; time revolving unceasingly in the illusion of the universe. But it was kept outside the Hall of Meditation, where the soul, emerging from its vortex, rests in the eternity of God.

I felt again absolutely certain that nothing perishes, that the rotation of the times is but a delusion by which the eternal essence of things, the world of symbol and idea, can never be assailed.

I strolled a little longer through the lonely garden and found in the annexes under shielding roofs the stone tablets on which are engraved the five sacred canons, Wu Ching and the four sacred books Ssŭ Shu.

It was again that artist by the grace of God the Emperor Ch'ien Lung who, in order to preserve the Chinese literature, built the whole P'i-yung

Kung, this Hall of Sublime Harmony after a very old model dating from the Han and T'ang dynasties. These two hundred stone tablets were copied from the model of the old dynasties in Hsi-an Fu, the former capital of the empire.

It was one of the strangest and most profound literary emotions I ever had in my life to read in the midst of Peking, in the Hall of Sublime Harmony, the texts that I had translated by lamp-light in my room in far-away Java.

There I saw the first text of the Ta Hioh (in Peking Ta Hsüeh). "The doctrine of Ta Hioh is, to make clear the luminous virtue, to renew the people, to rest in the supreme Good. If we know where to rest (in the supreme Good) then the purport of our life's purview is fixed. Has this been fixed, then there may be quietude. If there is quietude, then there may be rest. If there is rest, then there may be meditation. If there is meditation, then (the final aim) Tao will be obtained. Things have a Cause and an End. Knowing which is first and which is last means being near Tao."

Emotion prevented me from reading on. The beauty of the severe Chinese style, containing the wisdom of profound thought, the shame of often having deserted this the only object of real art, merely for the sake of literature, not for wisdom, affected me with a strange sensation of mingled joy and sorrow.

There is but one country in the world where the genuine higher essence of literature has been

preserved in purity. This is no small talk, no *Hsiao shuo,* as the Chinese call fiction and drama, even by the greatest authors. Nor is dry science explained in lifeless language held to be literature in China, but only wisdom beautifully expressed. In China beauty and wisdom are inseparable; hence Confucius was not only China's greatest sage, but also her greatest writer.

One realises this in the Temple of The Teacher of the Empire, in the Hall of Sublime Harmony. At the same time, the Western author who is considered a literary man in his native country because he happens to have written some novels or sketches is here healthily humiliated. In these sacred halls of China he is reminded of the fact that only he attains literature who expresses wisdom in beauty.

Most of the texts on the stone tablets could still be easily read, but here and there something was already disappearing. Between the tablets, which are after all sacred to serious Chinese literati, boards and benches had been put away carelessly and in disorder. So this sacred collection was surrounded by slovenliness and untidiness. Are the Chinese authorities already too busy with Western politics and modern reform to see to it that China's most precious treasures of wisdom and beauty shall be properly preserved?

An atmosphere of neglect, decay, and dilapidation rests on the P'i-yung Kung, and not only is the material dust of the Gobi desert sprinkled over it, but something like mental dust as well. The only exception is the brilliant *p'ai-lou* of Ch'ien Lung,

eternally young, imperishably beautiful. The dust of the desert slips off the smooth tiles, the rains wash and purify it; elements seem to combine to make it still more lovely.

Full of joy and hope, I passed once more under its white arches, feeling again that I had seen not only the past but also the future of China and of the whole world. In that future wisdom will be the supreme possession of the nations, and the emperor and sage who in wisdom and beauty frames the laws of empire will rule by laws that are the ways of God.

THE TEMPLE OF THE FIVE PAGODAS

CHAPTER XIII

THE TEMPLE OF THE FIVE PAGODAS

EACH time that I passed through the Ch'ien Mên to the Chinese City I was overwhelmed by the immense grandeur of that gate. It is really a sombre square within four walls with four tunnel-gates. That on the north serves for entrance and exit; the eastern one leads towards the Chinese city; the western towards the Tartar City; and the southern is always closed by powerful iron doors and used only by the emperor.

The Chinese have shown profound artistic sentiment in rebuilding the magnificent Ch'ien Mên, after it was burned down during the Boxer catastrophe of 1900. It was reconstructed in exactly the same style, with the same decayed stones, in the same old colours, entirely in harmony with the great ramparts that encircle the town threefold. One who knows nothing of the fire and the reconstruction might think that the Ch'ien Mên—its proper name is Chêng-Yang Mên (the Gate of the Straight Front) is centuries old.

Then, past the Ch'ien Mên, stands that splendid yet severe marble bridge leading to the

Ch'ien Mên Street; nothing but marble, with small marble columns ornamented by lions' heads: so fine, elegant, sensitive, that it is a delight to walk across it, and one steps carefully, fearing to injure something beautiful. After this exquisite little bridge, the T'ien Ch'iao, or Bridge of Heaven, stretches out the broad Boulevard, with its long vista through a magnificent *p'ai-lou*, a structure so noble that one feels a desire to pass through it singing for joy.

Looking back for a moment, one sees again the grim grey rampart of the Tartar City and the divine structure of the Ch'ien Mên, like a tower of Babylon, high and stable.

It is extremely curious to see European shops in this primeval city. In the Lang-fang Chieh, the first street on the right of the Ch'ien Mên Boulevard, there is a large bazaar, a sort of stores, called Ta-Kuan Lou. Here the old, picturesque, but dirty style of shops has been abandoned and everything is put in the large windows in European fashion. Taken altogether, they look like the big European bazaars: like shops side by side in a gigantic covered hall, with two stories of galleries also full of shops. On the highest gallery are Chinese restaurants, tea-houses, where all sorts of Chinese dainties may be partaken of.

Nothing gives one a better idea of the emancipation for which Chinese womanhood is now striving than a walk through this bazaar. Not more than ten years ago it was a shameful thing, a deadly sin, for a Chinese woman to show herself in public.

At the present time hundreds of them may be seen shopping in this Ta-Kuan Lou, although they are never by themselves, but always accompanied by men. Everything is to be got there: toys, toilet articles, clothes, furs, books, photographs, pictures, fancy articles, bric-à-brac, anything. One may see papa, mamma, and the children, nicely dressed, shopping like any *bon bourgeois* in any European town.

There are also European shops in the second street to the right, the Ta-sha Lärl. They show disgustingly ugly European things: timepieces, vases, tea-sets, lamps, all the horrors one may buy anywhere in a European bazaar for two or three shillings.

The most interesting street in the Chinese town, still as genuinely Chinese as it was centuries ago, lies a little farther west at the back of a maze of alleys and streets. It is the street of literature and art, the Liu-li Ch'ang, where booksellers and curio-dealers live. In modern Europe trades are generally scattered about, but in the ancient Chinese towns, where guilds have flourished for thousands of years, one may still find whole streets with shops of one trade side by side. Thus an orthodox Pekingese goes to the Liu-li Ch'ang whenever he wants to buy modern or old books, rare masterpieces in porcelain, bronze, jasper, or lacquer. Some antiques may be found also in the Tartar City—for example, in the Ha-ta Mên Street, or Lung-fu-ssŭ Chieh; but the genuine booksellers and dealers in antiques, famous for

generation after generation, a sort of trade-nobility, live in the Liu-li Ch'ang.

A first visit to these curiosity-shops is not very encouraging even to one who has the great advantage over other Europeans of speaking the Pekingese Chinese. Most, sometimes all, of the objects exhibited in the gloomy, insignificant little shops are either modern or imitations. The objectionable thing to the expert is that each Pekingese dealer thinks it a matter of course that any European or American who calls at his shop is an ignorant fool. With superb insolence he uses in every second sentence the words "Ch'ien Lung" or "K'ang Hsi," the most famous dynasties for exquisite porcelains. But he offers the most horrible imitations, or very insignificant vases or plates. He swears that this rubbish, with the signature Ta Ch'ing Kuang Hsü, the dynasty of the emperor who recently died, comes from the Ming dynasty, and your first visit is an absolute failure. In Amoy I paid a penny for a Kuan Yin statuette of stone, not even porcelain, from the well-known Tê-hua factory in the Fuhkien province, a brand-new thing. Here I was asked sixty dollars for one like it as being old K'ang Hsi. When I offered thirty dollars simply as a test, not intending to buy at that exorbitant price, I could not get it. Owing to the incredible ignorance and stupidity of globe-trotters and tourists, especially Americans, who buy worthless rubbish at fancy prices thinking to get Ch'ien Lung or K'ang Hsi, Peking has become the very last town in which to get really old porcelain or bronze.

The Temple of the Five Pagodas

The well-informed buyer of genuine old Chinese art knows, indeed, that it is as difficult to obtain beautiful porcelain or bronze as to win a beautiful girl. At the first call the beauty is not forthcoming, nor perhaps at the second. At the third visit she may show herself for a moment, but is inaccessible, far above any approach. A Chinese dealer does not show his beautiful things at once; he keeps them hidden away somewhere in a dark corner. He first wants to find out what sort of buyer he is dealing with. He learns it from the way in which one handles a vase or moves one's fingers along the contour of a little tray; from the look in one's eyes, from the tone of one's voice. If he thinks it worth his while and sees that the customer is able to pay, he produces something really beautiful at the second or third call. It is wrapped in old silks, enclosed in an old cupboard that he opens carefully, as a maiden removes a veil. Then he puts it before the buyer without a word, scrutinising his eyes and each feature of his face.

Just as a wise man keeps his most beautiful and sacred thoughts at the back of his soul, safe from profane eyes, so the Chinese dealer in antiques conceals his most precious things in a corner at the rear of his shop, showing them only to those whom he deems worthy of them. When the precious object is at last unveiled the customer must not expect to carry it off, unless he be prepared to pay an exorbitant price. The love it inspires must be hidden; a placid face must

conceal the appreciation of its charms. Bids must follow slowly, weeks often elapsing between them, until after long hankering and suppressed pining the beautiful object is brought home like a bride.

* * * * *

I once made an unforgettable excursion to the Temple of the Five Pagodas, the Wu-t'a-Ssŭ, where beauty centuries old is found by the side of very modern displays.

An elegant rickshaw on rubber tyres, with two runners, ordered at the hotel, had taken me outside the town through the western gate. It put me down near a curious modern-looking garden, enclosed by a high iron railing, in a broad country lane. It was what I could hardly have expected in Peking, a modern Zoological Garden. This was the one thing lacking; a "Zoo" in Peking! It is really not only a Zoological but also a Botanical Garden, with nurseries for flowers and plants. The golden letters over the entrance gate "Nung Shih Shih Yen Ch'ang" (Experimental Station for Agriculture) indicate only the botanical character of the institution. Here, just as in the large zoological gardens of Europe, are cages with all kinds of animals—tigers, panthers, bears, elephants, camels, apes, birds, and, just as in Europe, whole families go there for a pleasant afternoon. What astonished me most was that everything was kept so clean—on the whole not a characteristic of the Chinese—and that the arrangements were so trim and modern. There are refreshment-rooms, too, where Chinese as well as European dishes may be

obtained. It strikes one as very odd to find oneself suddenly in a European modern "Zoo" after a rickshaw drive of nearly an hour through Peking, from the hotel to the Hsi-chih Mên through the gloomy tunnel-gate, along the broad country road, across a real typical landscape without anything European about it.

The rickshaw coolies took me here by mistake, for it was my intention to go to the Temple of the Five Pagodas. After a flying visit to this Pekingese Zoo, I explained that I had to go on. But it soon became apparent that the road, full of clods and ruts, sloping everywhere was not passable for the rickshaw, so I continued my way on foot. After a quarter of an hour I arrived at a very good road with a canal on the right, rice-fields and small lotus-lakes on the left. On the other side of the canal was a large grey wall.

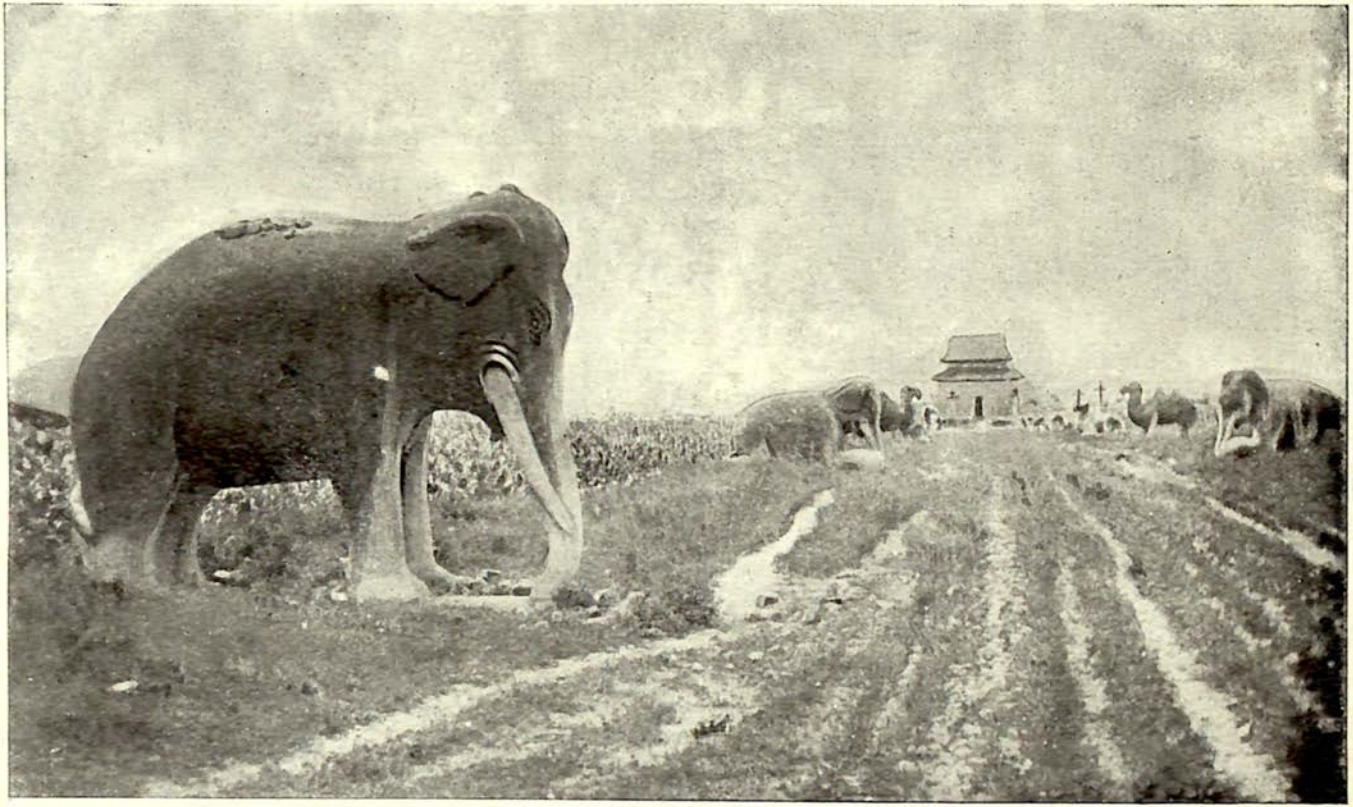
Here again I had very strongly the feeling, now and then almost rising to remembrance, that I had been there before. Yes; the canal bordered by willows, and those fields; I knew them; I had walked here before. How familiar was all this! the luminous clearness, the cloudless sky, the vast, autumnal stillness of this Chinese landscape. The temple ought to be somewhere about here, but where? I did not remember, and yet I knew! There, that wall in the fields, behind those clay cottages. I must leave the road, go into the field; then I should reach it. Yes, I knew it now. Had I seen it before in a dream?

I went across the hilly country, past a couple of

Chinese farmyards; frightened children ran away screaming, their pig-tails swinging on their backs; farther on was an old tottering wall. And there, deserted, in the midst of barren fields, neglected, in an atmosphere of decay and vanished antiquity, stood a wonder of devotion, a stately temple, from which hundreds of Buddhas gaze praying over the fastnesses, its five superb pagodas towering in the sky. The strange thing is that this temple in the middle of a Chinese landscape is not Chinese at all, but a sublime product of Hindu art. It is a Hindu temple arisen outside Peking, as if an exalted thought from the Buddhism of India were petrified in China. It is called Wu-t'a Ssŭ, from its five pagodas.

Massive and square the temple rises from the ground. Five stories surmount each other covered with niches in which sit Buddha images with crossed legs and clasped hands, in meditation. Hundreds of these Buddhas sit in these five stories, and large as this multitude of statues is, it gives the impression, not of a confused crowd but of sacred silence and peace.

On the square structure, fifty feet high, rest five pagodas, one at each point of the compass, the highest in the centre. Stately and lofty they rise up, eleven stories high, on each side a niche with a contemplating Buddha. From the corners of the pagoda stories hang little bronze bells that jingle when moved by the breeze. How plain is the structure of this temple! From a distance it shows very simple, severe lines. But when near it is



AVENUE OF SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS IN STONE.

seen to be covered with beautifully carved bas-reliefs. The borders of the stories and the curves of the niches are decorated with finely sculptured images and symbols. All over the temple holy Tibetan mantras are engraved in strange, mystical characters.

This monument of devotion under the blue sky, amid wide fields, in the rural quiet, brings the visitor to a reverent pause. The hundreds of Buddhas, devout and motionless, radiating tranquillity upon all sides, urge the soul to higher spheres of spiritual self-consciousness, as if the temple were erected in one's own soul. It seems as though all the thought-vibrations of these meditating Buddhas quiver around it, ethereal streams of energy flow from it, and the sublime idea materialised in stone touches the soul. The temple seems to stand in an atmosphere of mystical power.

The whole landscape seemed to lie under a thrill of saintly thoughts. Everywhere scattered in the barren fields I saw ruins of sacred Hindu-Dagobas, consecrated to the pious dead. In the distance, beyond three *p'ai-lous,* magnificent under the wide sky, stretched an avenue of sepulchral monuments in stone, marble animals and figures representing the servants of deceased noblemen. The whole district is consecrated to the holy quiet and peace of death that has no terror.

The afternoon was very still, the autumn colouring of the foliage was entirely in harmony with the mood evoked by these sepulchral monu-

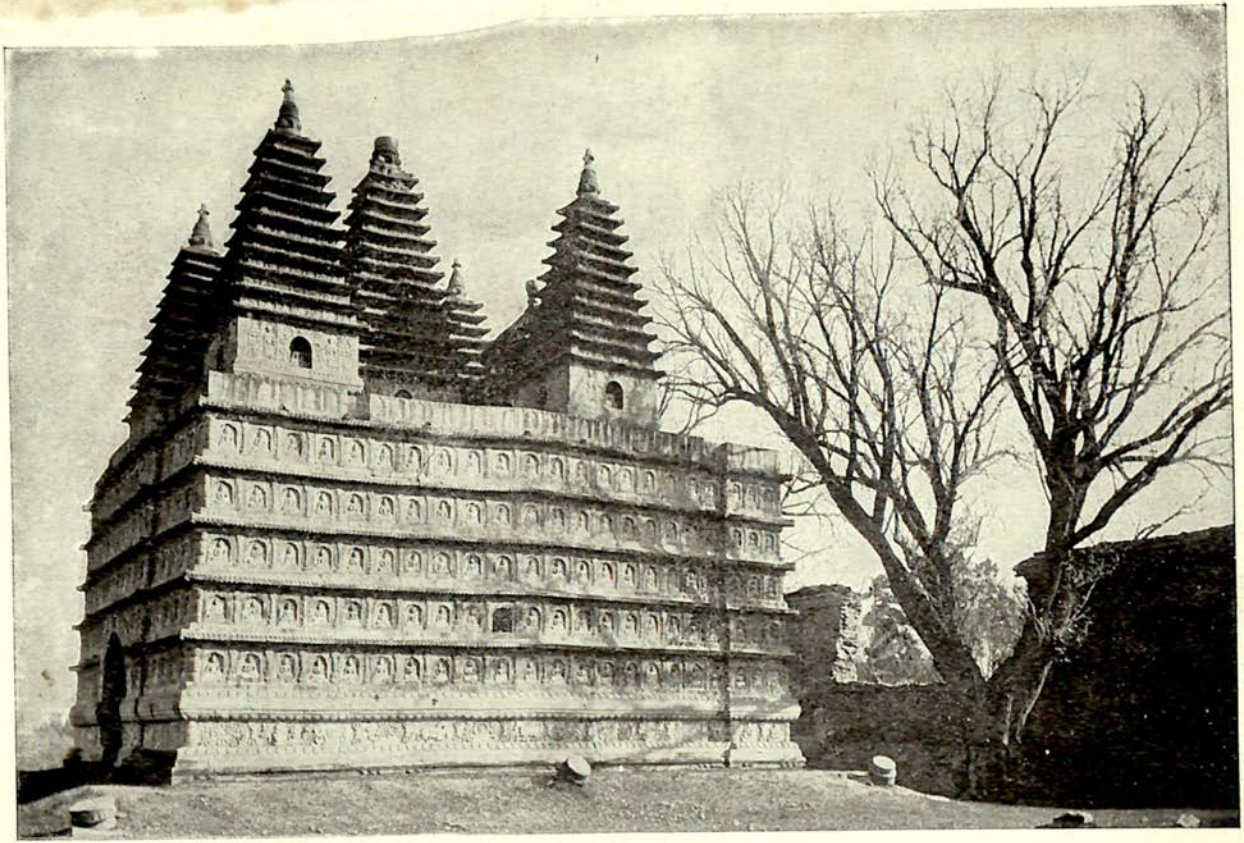
ments. I seemed to hear in the faint breeze a whisper which murmured, "Everything vanishes; everything passes away."

Behind this temple at the north side, as near so many monuments in Peking, there are strange trees, into which something of the sanctity of the thought which gave birth to such architecture seems to have passed. There are two magnificent *Salisburia adianbifolia,* one at each corner, like true brothers that screen the sanctuary and will live and die with it.

The erection of this grand Wu-t'a Ssŭ is another example of imperial munificence, only possible to the Son of Heaven who dwells in the purple Forbidden City in the capital of the Middle Kingdom.[1]

In one of the first years of the reign of Yung Lo (1403-24) of the Ming dynasty, a very high Hindu Śramana came to Peking for the purpose of offering that Emperor five golden statues, symbols of the five Dhyani Buddhas, and a stone model of the "Vajrasana," the "diamond throne," the temple Mahābōdhi erected in Buddha-Gaya, on the spot where Sakyamuni acquired the Buddhaship. The Emperor Yung Lo, highly honoured by this precious gift from such a distant, sacred country, desired to accept it in an imperial manner. In order worthily to house the Buddha statues he had a temple built exactly after the stone model of the "diamond throne," a duplicate

[1] The Chinese name of China is *Chung Kuo,* or Middle Kingdom.



WU-T'A SSŬ TEMPLE, DUPLICATE OF THE TEMPLE MAHABODHI IN BUDDHA-GAYA.

of the sacred temple Mahābōdhi in Buddha-Gaya. It was not given to him to see it completed, for it was not solemnly consecrated until the eleventh month of the year 1473, during the reign of Ch'êng Hua. The Emperor himself caused this important fact to be stated on a square marble column by the side of the temple.

The five golden Buddha statues were thus placed in shrines in the five pagodas above the five square terraces. And in the four shrines of the base of each pagoda these Buddhas have been once more reproduced in stone.

The manner in which Chinese Emperors honoured gifts from foreign countries by building temples around them is surely imperial and noble. In the same way Ch'ien Lung honoured the Tashi Lama from Thibet by building a temple over his garments, the white marble Stûpa of the Yellow Temple. That the same divine artist Ch'ien Lung realised the supreme beauty of this Wu-t'a Ssŭ is proved by another column, for which he engraved an inscription with his own hand.

The idea of the divinity of emperors must have fallen low in the Chinese national soul in consequence of the stress of modern ideas. This only makes it possible that this column of the great Emperor Ch'ien Lung, hurled from its pedestal, should lie on the ground half-buried in the grass, as if it were a valueless thing. Dirt and mud are splashed on the golden characters, once held sacred because written with the imperial brush, the *yü pi*, as recorded upon it. The temple used to be sur-

rounded by a stone wall with finely-carved battlements after Indian models, but little of it remains. The magnificent monument now stands in the open field, deserted and neglected. It is a miracle that it has suffered so little damage. Here and there a couple of Buddhas have disappeared from the shrines, probably stolen by tourists, but on the whole, although old and weatherbeaten, it is still intact. Only the column of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung, thrown down as a worthless, superfluous thing, is a pitiful desecration to any one who can understand the sanctity of the imperial idea in China and who knows how, up to a few years ago, every written character was considered sacred. So great is this devotion to letters in China that no true lover of literature would ever throw away in the street a sheet of paper filled with writing. He would pick from the mud every rag containing writing and reverently burn it.

It is therefore of immense significance that the imperial characters of Ch'ien Lung have been cast away on the ground. This fact says more about the progress of reform than could volumes full of explanation.

The sight filled me with sorrow. It was as if something of the grandeur of an ancient idea were lying in the dust, destroyed by the spirit of modernity that has thundered into Peking with the black steed of steam. The sanctity of emperorship by the grace of God lies there in the dust with the fallen column.

I wandered for a long time round the holy

temple, standing grey and lonely in the solitary field, so old, so very old, so abandoned. It was the holiness, wisdom, and beauty of centuries gone by: it is passing and will become a ruin in the course of time.

Glorious *dagobas* were already fallen in dust and ruin, and I never felt so strongly as on this autumn afternoon the irrevocable march of time. Nothing can save any more either the fair art of China from ages so long gone by or the imperial idea that created all this beauty.

At last I went away as if in a dream, walking back along the canal in a different direction, but feeling sure I should reach by that way the gate Hsi-chih Mên, because—why, because I had been here before. In a dream? In a former existence?

And, indeed, within half an hour I arrived at Peking's western gate.

THE SUMMER PALACE

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUMMER PALACE

THE fairy-like summer palace, Yüan Ming Yüan, the most beautiful palace in the world with its enchanting gardens, full of treasures of porcelain, bronze, jasper, and lacquer, was destroyed in 1860 by the vandals from the West. The French and English soldiers attacked it like barbarians, robbed like bandits, and destroyed like savages. All that was too large to be carried away, such as immense porcelain vases and bronze incense-burners, was wantonly hacked to pieces. On the 18th of October the French looted the palace; on the 28th Lord Elgin had it burned down by his English. Art treasures of incalculable value, in which the supreme artistic soul of China had expressed itself for centuries, treasures considered worthy of the environment of the Son of Heaven on account of their ideal perfection, were looted or destroyed by western "Christians" as if they were Huns or Vandals. It was as great a crime as it would have been if in 1870 the Prussians had looted and burned the Louvre with all its treasures.

Another summer palace is the I Ho Yüan, the

Garden of Oblivion and Harmony, at present generally called Wan Shou Shan, the Mountain of Ten Thousand Eternal Lives,[1] after the mountain in its midst. It escaped destruction, although Lord Elgin tried to destroy it by throwing bombs at the magnificent temple of glazed earthenware on the top of the mountain.

The summer palace is no longer open daily to tourists: they damaged, and even robbed it. Visitors are admitted on two Wednesdays of each month, provided they can present an order for admission, applied for by their Legation. These Wednesday visitors are solemnly received at the palace entrance by mandarins of the Wai-wu Pu, the Foreign Office, on behalf of the Chinese authorities. They thereby display the diplomatic courtesy that so often is the gilded shell of distrust and contempt. Their Chinese hosts, after conducting the visitors into a reception-room where tea and refreshments are offered, then show them over the palace, ostensibly to be of service to them by giving information, but in reality to watch them so that they may not do more damage or steal.

I hesitated to go to the summer palace on one of the Wednesdays, because I saw at the hotel the crowds of tourists, noisy, obnoxious creatures with cameras and sketch-books, who went there regularly. I allowed the autumn to pass, hoping that the severe cold of the winter might lessen the tourist plague. But although it decreased it

[1] This Wan Shou may also mean "the Emperor's Birthday."

MANDARINS OF THE WAI-WU-PU, THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

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was not discontinued; each Wednesday morning files of carriages from the hotel and the Peking Horse Bazaar—there is a modern livery stable, a European jobmaster's establishment in Peking—stood in front of the "Wagons Lits," waiting for visitors to the Wan Shou Shan.

Nothing could be done. My time passed and I could not wait any longer. I made up my mind to leave an hour after the others, who started at eight o'clock in the morning. And at nine I went to the summer Palace, in a brougham with a pair of horses plumed and tinkling with bells. It is a drive of two hours from the hotel beyond the south gate of Peking.

I knew already that this was not a matter of one palace, as in Europe, but an extensive park of palaces, temples, islands, lakes, grottos, and graceful bridges.

The drive through Peking was delightful in the dry, cold air, along the magnificent Huang-Ch'êng Chieh, the Street of the Imperial City, by the Forbidden City and the Coal Hill, Mei Shan. When I passed the Coal Hill, just in front of the Forbidden City, it occurred to me that this height was probably erected not as a depository for coals, but as a screen for the Forbidden City against the cold blasts from the north and its deserts, and against bad spirits and influences emanating from those places of death and drought.

Outside the Hsi-chih Mên I drove along a splendid and excellently kept roadway. The late

Dowager Empress, remembering that "charity begins at home," had taken good care when she commanded the making of new roads in Peking that the road leading to her favourite summer residence should be one of the first to be finished. The trees had already shed all their leaves; here and there a thin layer of ice covered pools and ponds, fields were barren and forests bare. It seemed unreal to go to a summer palace across this rigid wintry region.

I drove for an hour along this road, through a village called Hai-tien, by never-ending fields and forests. Then I entered a sideway, and another; passed along a high circular wall with the imperial yellow tiles. Soon I found myself at a gate. Immediately on alighting I was led inside, and stood in a sort of hall or passage in front of a couple of mandarins, solemn potentates of the Wai-wu Pu. What might be my "honoured surname" and my "respected empire"? My "despicable name" was Borel, and my "insignificant little country" the Netherlands. And so on.

The entire series of Chinese courtesies was laboured through in the Peking language, for the gentlemen were not very brilliant English scholars. I declined the invitation to take tea, but courteously urged that I might see the palace at once, for it was already eleven o'clock, and in winter dusk falls early.

A stout mandarin went with me. In winter they are all stout in their clothes lined with cotton-wool and upper garments padded with the skins of

Siberian sheep. But this was an exceptionally fat one. I observed that he walked with difficulty, panting and puffing. One could tell that it was an awkward job for him to ramble a couple of hours with a "foreign devil" who walked quickly and wanted to see everything.

Not much of a palace could yet be seen. We passed through a latticed gate guarded by soldiers. We went through a hilly landscape composed of artificial rocks, turned a sharp corner, and suddenly gazed upon a pure, shining, still blue lake, fairy-like palaces on a hill, distant horizons and shadowy mountains: an apotheosis of light and colour.

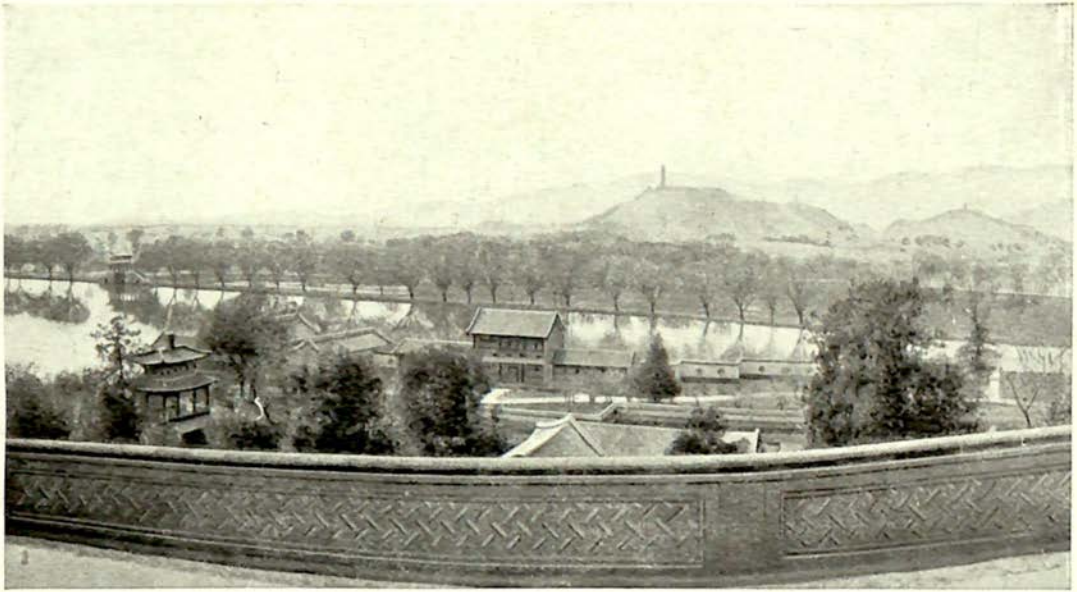
The most beautiful thing of all is the wide, calm lake, sleeping tranquilly between its softly rounded banks. It is a circle, four miles in circumference, of still blue water within a white marble-like embankment. Here and there a thin, delicate film of ice glittered in the sunshine, gently veiling this lake of profound purity and peace. On the north and east this vast sheet of water is surrounded by a marble balustrade. Behind it rises the high hill, on which, fronting the south, stand palaces and temples among groups of trees. It is a marvel of architecture, nature and art, this hill looking down into the silent lake. Those palaces have been scattered against the slope in seeming heedlessness, but in reality with a very fine artistic sense, with those magnificent trees between them. Higher and higher up the hill they climb, until, quite at the top, on a massive rock,

appears a temple with a glorious pagoda towering into the sky.

With their brilliant yellow and green roofs, these splendid palaces make the hill on which they are scattered look like a mountain of jewels, crowned by a sanctuary. The pagoda sparkles in the sun, slender on its solid rock, terrace rises above terrace with slim columns and curving roofs, at the top of all shines a large golden ball. All this beauty is reflected in the smooth water, as sublime thoughts are reflected in the depths of the unruffled soul.

At the south and the west of the lake I saw narrow lanes, and bridges so delicate and slender that it seemed as if angels' hands had stretched them across the water. At the extreme end there is a cupola, a pavilion on an islet, and grottos.

I felt this quiet lake, this K'un-ming Hu, to be the soul of the entire design. On this silent lake the god-emperors floated, far from the crowded city, in the brilliant barges with yellow pavilions. Here they dreamed to the accompaniment of harps and lutes, fanned by the slender hands of princesses, gazing upwards into heaven, that was their father. Or perhaps they wandered by the banks of the lake on moonlight nights, reading their fate in the stars, thrilled by the thought of the hundreds of millions for whom they were responsible to heaven. And notwithstanding the splendour of the visions round them, they recognised the solitude of their soul in the solitude of the silent, unfathomable lake.



BALUSTRADE AT THE LAKE, WITH VIEW OF PART OF THE SUMMER PALACE.

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The Summer Palace

It was once more Ch'ien Lung, the artist-Emperor, who dreamed his dreams of beauty in this sublime summer palace, Wan Shou Shan. The chief design of this paradise of art is his.

I stood still for a moment, leaning on the marble balustrade, overwhelmed by the beauty around, feeling the kinship of the deep, calm waters with the depths of my soul. Coarse voices, shrill chatter, brutally disturbed the stillness. A crowd of tourists appeared round a corner. Their voices were harsh, their gestures grotesque. Cameras were pointed at the lake. Women cried, "Oh, how lovely!" "How awfully nice!" It was unendurable. But the stout mandarin urged me to join them when the party with two other mandarins went north, up the hill; I supposed I must follow, and I went. But now I saw everything as through a haze, heard everything as through a curtain. By the overflowing influence of these noisy, unsympathetic people the delicate aura of my thoughts at the silent lake was torn to pieces like a cobweb.

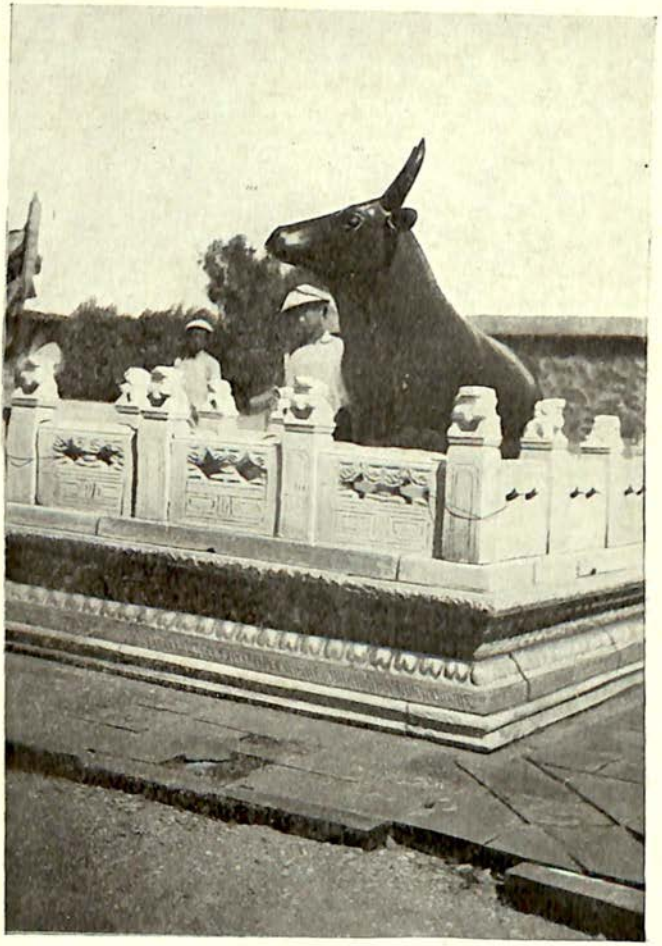
I remember a confused hubbub of voices, a bustle of gesticulations, and the monotonous declaiming of explanations by the mandarins. "This is the dwelling of the Empress Lo Shou T'ang, the Abode of Joy and Long Life." "This is the Emperor's palace," &c., &c. In the square before us I saw superb palaces, with bronze storks and stags, incense-burners, door-panels, exquisitely carved, bas-reliefs in marble, one splendour succeeding the other as we ascended the hill. I saw

an open pavilion on a sort of bridge guarded by marble lions; I saw far down on the southern incline a temple made entirely of bronze—bronze columns, bronze beams, bronze tiles—on a pedestal of marble. But there was a constant clamour of voices round me, a herd of vacant faces, incessantly hurried on by the mandarins, who wished to get through the business as quickly as possible, without allowing one time to take in everything thoroughly and to feel it through and through.

At last it became too much for me, and I decided to risk everything. I left the party and began to descend towards the lake. The stout mandarin called me back; we had not yet finished: we had still to go to the highest point, to the temple there. I did not answer, but walked on. The mandarin came after me, panting and gasping.

He did not catch me up till I was quite at the bottom. He was clearly tired to death after the climb and the subsequent rapid descent. Where did I want to go? Why did I want to go away? I told him that I wanted to walk along the lake, where it was quiet and still. I asked him where the famous bronze ox was that I had seen mentioned in a book by Mrs. Archibald Little?[1] Oh! that was quite a long way off, along the water on the left, near that pavilion in the distance. Tourists hardly ever asked for it. Nor would they go there to-day, for

[1] "Round About my Peking Garden" (illustrated). London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905.



BRONZE OX.

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it was quite at the other end. It was much too far to walk all that way after climbing so much.

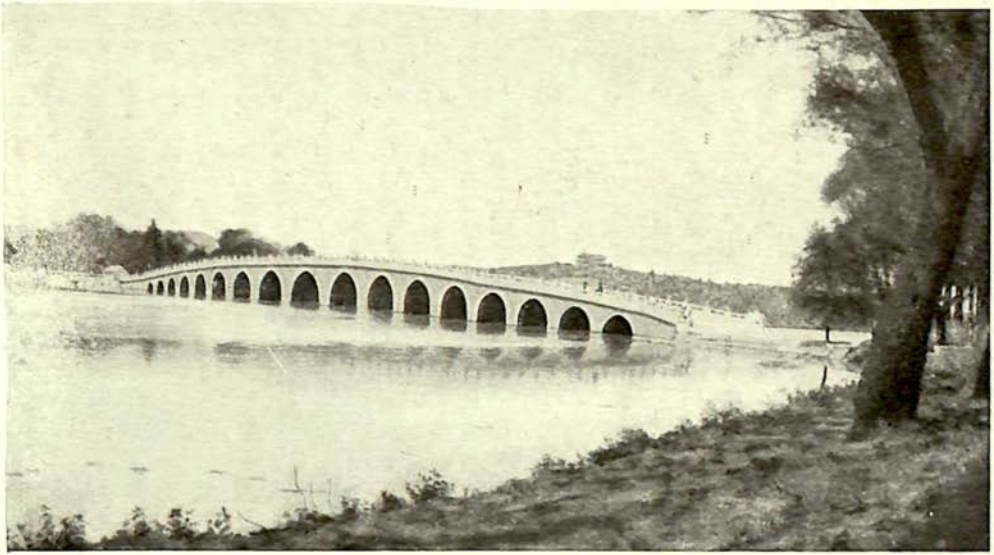
Then I began to explain to the mandarin, in all the courteous phrases I remembered from my lessons, that he ought not to exert himself so much to give information to an insignificant foreigner like myself. It was far too tiring for him and I could quite well go by myself. I did not wish to cover myself with everlasting shame by asking him to take so much trouble. I could perfectly well go alone, for I was absolutely compelled to see that bronze ox, &c. After the usual "*Ta jên liu pu*" ("Mighty Lord, stop your steps!") I marched off at such a pace that he could not possibly keep up with me. It was contrary to all rules of etiquette, a preposterous insolence, and against the imperial command. I was well aware of that, but happen what might, I wanted to wander about the Summer Palace without being disturbed.

For a short time I heard the stout mandarin panting behind me, but he had to give it up soon enough, and then I felt free of all restraint. I drew a deep breath and went still more quickly along the lake, farther and farther towards solitude, away from the hard faces of men. At a great distance I saw the gleam of a red and gold pavilion, and behind it a snow-white marble bridge, hovering over the smooth water like a thought of love.

At last I was alone near the silent lake, far from all these people. I walked on the white embankment by the side of the blue, still water. There I saw a large black ox on white marble.

It is of dark, shining bronze; with raised head it gazes dreamily across the water at the green and yellow palaces in the distance, at the far-off mountains. How tranquil is this black bronze animal! Can it be of bronze? Is it perhaps one of the black sacrificial animals kept in the Temple of Heaven that has strayed to this place? It can hardly be bronze. Look at the contour of the hips, the neck, the movement of the bent neck, at the eyes gazing across the water. See, did it not slightly, ever so slightly, move its head to the right? It will soon get up; wait, only wait. I approached quickly. Is it really alive? No. It is bronze—black, shining bronze. It is an ox of bronze; but a marvel, a marvel on the border between life and death. It would seem quite natural and not at all miraculous if the noble beast rose and jumped down from the pedestal. There is life in each curve, in each flexure; but it is more beautiful than life, because it is art and cannot die. Nothing brutal is left: it is life made divine, immortalised in bronze. I saw many superb bronzes in China, but this one is the masterpiece. Softly and discreetly I stroked the smooth bronze, as if I touched sacred life.

Then I saw at the back an inscription in delicate Chinese characters, Imperial stanzas by the inspired Artist-Emperor Ch'ien Lung. And once more I thought how great an artist was Ch'ien Lung. With a god-like gesture he bestowed supreme art on splendid Peking. Reverentially I read the stanzas. They relate how this bronze ox was cast after the



MARBLE BRIDGE OF SEVENTEEN ARCHES.

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model of Yü of Hsia, centuries and centuries old. After he had curbed the giant stream by colossal irrigation works, thereby bringing agriculture to full prosperity, the emperor wrote a hymn of praise to the bronze ox, the sacred animal that protects agriculture, vanquishes dragons and monsters, and shines in the heavenly zodiac.

A little farther away stands a magnificent red and gold pavilion, another creation of the great imperial artist. A white marble bridge on seventeen arches leads from it to an island of rocks in the lake. These arches brood over the blue water as if they prayed. On the balustrades are delicate columns with lions' heads. It is not like a bridge for human beings, rather for the Elysian Fields, to be trodden by none but shining angels and beatified souls. I rested in the red pavilion, supported by red beams, heavily decorated with ruddy *vieil or*, and looked at the paradise around me with appreciative eyes.

To the north, facing me, were the yellow and green jewel-like temples and palaces scattered over the high hill, between them great trees like fans. Towering on the hilltop rose the holy pagoda, its golden ball sparkling in the sun. It seemed a hill from heavenly regions peopled by *devas* and gods.

To the west lay the distant mountains, in a wide sweep of delicate curves, undulating as if to the rhythm of sacred music. Against the slope of a distant mountain I indistinctly saw white buildings like shrines. They formed the most beautiful temple outside Peking, the Pi-Yün Ssŭ, the Temple

of the Emerald Clouds. I had postponed my visit to it, merely because I wished to leave to the last something sacred, something to dream of; for unseen beauty is fairer than beauty gazed upon. I had read of its marble shrines, Hindu bas-reliefs, lofty *p'ai-lous* and gates. But I never went there, so that if I returned to Peking perhaps after many years, I might find something virgin, something undefiled. Now I saw it in the remote distance, white on the undulating mountains, spiritual, like a Temple of the Grail.

Farther west still, on the summit of a mountain, stands like a frail flower a solitary pagoda. In these pagodas of seven stories the soul that can read it may find the sacred symbol of the entire creation.

It is the same mystical symbolism as that of the Hindu Stûpa, from which the stately *toran* arises. The square case represents the earth, and the earthy mounts to the heavenly through seven stories—the seven "regions" of occult mysticism —of which the first four are polygonous, the last three circular, typifying infinity. The seven stories of the pagoda symbolise the seven regions through which the soul rises up to God. At the sides of these stories are suspended bronze bells tinkling in the air, the musical symbol of the harmony of the spheres vibrating in the delicate ether, only discernible in the highest zone of perception.

This distant flower-like pagoda beheld from the red and gold pavilion affected me in its mystical

symbolism as an occult salutation from remote regions, a revelation of the divine.

I wished to have another look at the marble column which I had passed near the pavilion. I found there other verses in Chinese characters, finely drawn by the imperial brush: an ode to the beauty of this landscape, full of daring and sublime metaphors; an ode by the Artist-Emperor Ch'ien Lung.

Thus the god-emperors of China engraved their poems on columns of white marble that would last through the ages.

I returned to the pavilion, sat down on a bench near one of the balustrades, and looked about me. How still, how quiet was all around! Only a huge flock of quacking wild ducks now and then skimmed the wide water. The sky was again the deep, Peking blue, immaculate, cloudless. Chastely the pure lake hid the divine mystery beneath its delicate film of ice, fragile enough to be shattered by a breeze. Tranquilly the bronze ox stared across the smooth water, meditating with blind, inward gaze.

It seemed a dream, too intimate and too sweet to be real, this solitary, undisturbed rest in the imperial Summer Palace. I rose reluctantly; it was as if I were under a spell on that seat beneath the red pavilion, as if I must stay here for ever, gazing at the wonders round me.

I now perceived another bridge in the distance, at the other side. It was quite different from the one with the arches before me. It was one single

arch, thrown across the water like a camel's back. I now remembered having read of it. This was the *Lo-kuo Ch'iao* (the "Bridge of the Curved Back"), so high that imperial barges could pass underneath it without lowering their masts. The bridge like a camel's hump makes a curious impression in the quiet charm around it, but, strangely enough, is not incongruous; even this whim is a beautiful caprice of art.

The bridge in front of me was far more beautiful. I almost feared to traverse it. It seemed a dream that I was really walking over its marble arches, alone in this elysian garden, passing those lions' heads, each a marvel of ornament.

The island I now reached was as picturesque. Great granite rocks were heaped upon each other, interspersed with green firs; here and there were little houses, small temples hidden behind dense masses of foliage.

It was all imitation, but so wonderfully artistic that it was perhaps more striking than a landscape of real rocks would have been. Immense blocks of granite lay about, isolated or in groups; bowery lanes ran up or down. Here and there I came upon a belvedere with balustrade, from whence was visible the whole panorama of lake and hill, palace and mountain. But it was exactly the artificiality, the incredible fact that this entire island must have been made by human hands, that made it so unreal. It seemed a vision, not a sober fact; one felt a strange sensation of being no longer sure of one's own perception.

In such a frame of mind, half-awake and half-dreaming, I walked about the island, climbing and descending, now and then pausing to look across the shining lake at the splendours in the distance. Suddenly I found myself in an open square, the fore-court of a temple. A stately *p'ai-lou* faced an open avenue with motionless firs on each side, then came another *p'ai-lou*. These superb gates are of flaming red, mingled with triumphant green and gold. On one of them I read "*Jih ying*" ("Sun Reflex"), on another "*Yüeh ching*" ("Moon-Mirror").

Here stood a temple surrounded with walls.

All was profoundly still. No one seemed to live here. The old wooden temple door was closed, barred and bolted.

I felt no desire to knock. Any sound would have seemed desecration in this silent court with motionless firs, where only the exulting colours of the *p'ai-lous* pealed out their song of praise. I could not knock; I could not disturb the sacred repose. There are temples that must remain closed, their holiness untouched. On the right I saw another door of Imperial yellow shining out from the green firs.

I paused for a moment in the lonely court. The temples of the solitary island were closed, and so should they remain.

Then I returned, pondering over the symbol of the tranquil lake, the still waters, the island shrines, barred and untrodden. The holy secret, immaculate, untouched, was enthroned above all change of time.

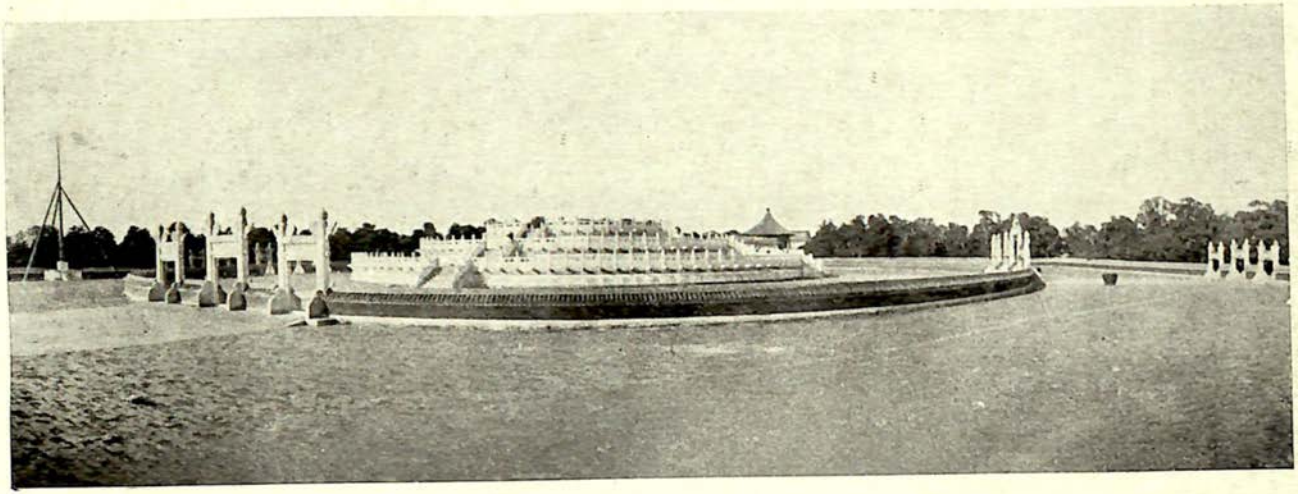
I knew now that I had felt the soul of the Summer Palace. The truest beauty was not in the marvels of architecture, the jewel-like dwellings on the hill: it was in the silent, deep blue lake mirroring the azure sky, in the clear spaces of air and light, in the mountains that seemed to lift their heads in worship. In this holy solitude all that is external sinks away.

Once more I passed the bronze ox and hardly needed to look at it; its image was for ever clearly reflected in my soul.

Something of the deep thoughts, the golden dreams of the emperors had entered into me. They also had wandered here; had understood the silence of the waters; had known the solitary island; had felt themselves soaring far away, along the praying lines of the distant mountains. Yes, this is really a I Ho Yüan.[1]

[1] The "I" in *I Ho Yüan*, translated by me as "oblivion," cannot really be translated at all. It means "rest" as well as "oblivion," but also "that which educates the soul."

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN



THE ALTAR OF HEAVEN, T'IEN T'AN.

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CHAPTER XV

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

"I AM responsible for the misdeeds of the people."

"I, a little child, am full of fears."

"It has been given to me, a solitary man, to grant peace to your states and families, and now I do not know whether I do not insult the powers above and beneath me. I dare not forgive myself for the evil in me. I shall examine all things in harmony with the spirit of God."

These three texts from the sacred Book of History—the Shu Ching—enable one to understand what must have been in the mind of Chinese emperors when they proceeded to the Temple of Heaven, laden with all the sins of their hundreds of millions of subjects, in order to raise in prayer the souls of all the people to Shang Ti, the only God, in the centre of the Universe, the focus of the three upper regions of existence.

One has to go back to primeval times, to the profoundest esoteric mysticism, if one wishes to understand the symbolism of the original service on the *T'ien T'an* (the Altar of Heaven).

The whole history of China abounds in texts from which it is evident that the first great rulers of the empire were more than ordinary human beings. Not mortals like the people, but sages, adepts, by whose occult power the empire was kept together. The title *T'ien Tzŭ* (Son of Heaven) indicates it clearly. The whole account of the Chinese emperorship in the primeval classics, which frequently refer to other pre-historic times, is remarkably analogous to all the occult traditions about the wise initiated princes of the best periods of Atlantis. The sanctity and holiness surrounding the Chinese emperor is inexplicable to those who know nothing of occultism. They cannot understand why he was considered so sacred that he was kept hidden from the multitude in the centre of three regions surrounded by walls, which symbolise the three highest of the seven planes of existence of the God who revealed himself in the Universe. Nor is it clear to them why, until a few years ago, the emperor remained invisible behind a screen at all receptions so that no mortal outsider might look upon him. Equally strange they consider the custom that whenever the emperor passed in the street all windows must be closed, all houses locked, all side-streets hidden behind cloth, and it was forbidden, under penalty of death, to cast eyes on him.

All these things become clear and simple to one who thinks of the mystical initiated kings of the Atlantic City of the Golden Gates. Its *aura* was so divine and its etheric emanations so

powerful that they would kill as by lightning any one who might venture too near.[1]

In the primeval times to which the Shu Ching alludes so frequently it was the occult power of the wise initiated emperor that kept the empire together and made the people prosperous. If he applied it in the right manner he could even rule the elements, disposing sunshine and rain as was favourable to agriculture, by which the nation had to live. Were the emperor no longer pure, did he allow himself to be ruled by passions and desires, he lessened (the first principles of mysticism and occultism teach this) his superhuman —not " supernatural "—powers, and could no longer influence the nation beneficially. The well-known " praying for rain " is ridiculous and superstitious in the eyes of materially-minded sinologues and, alas ! such are most erudite professors. But in its original symbolic meaning it was not nearly so childish as what has been written about it in European languages. Even now there are mystical *mantras* able to cause vibrations in the material and super-material worlds, the effects of which would make us gasp as if they were done by sorcery ; one finds them in the really holy monasteries of inmost Thibet, among really initiated

[1] I am perfectly aware that merely scientific sinologues will smile at this. But the entire plan of the Chinese emperorship and the whole primeval religion of the Chinese are one vast symbolism. Mystical, occult matters cannot be explained in a scientific, intellectual manner. A sinologue, not mystically minded, not versed in occult and mystical literature, understands nothing of Peking's symbolism, which is the foundation of everything.

priests. In the same way an initiated emperor in the primeval ages of the Shu Ching could quite well cause rain to fall by the occult vibrations of his prayer.[1] But if he were of unclean mind, moving too much on a low, materialistic plane and deserting the purely spiritual, his superhuman power would decrease and he would lose the ability to put into motion these super-materialistic vibrations. Hence the ancient idea that it was the emperor's fault if the nation were not prosperous or were visited by calamities which he could not avert. Without the explanation of mysticism this notion would be absurd.

Even in later times, when the emperors had long ceased to be initiated and were only ordinary mortals, when for centuries the empty, outer ritual was all that was left of all this mysticism, this responsibility of the emperors remained a living truth to them.

Even in 1802 the Emperor Chia Ch'ing prayed for rain after a terrific drought that threatened the country with famine. He used the following humble words, taking the whole guilt upon himself: "I, Heaven's servant, am placed over humanity and am responsible for maintaining order in the world. Trembling for fear, I remember the cause of this bitter calamity to be the enormity of my trespasses. I am obliged to emulate my ancestors and examine whether I have failed in offerings, allowed pride or licence to enter my heart, showed tardiness in

[1] In the same manner Jesus could perform by occult power all the miracles the Bible mentions.

performing the duties of government, brought distress to the people by building costly tombs or laying out gardens, have appointed unworthy officials, rejected the appeals of the aggrieved, persecuted the innocent, or made war for profit. On my knees I implore Heaven to forgive my ignorance and foolishness and to grant me self-renewal, for the fate of myriads of innocent people is influenced by me, a single human being."

Such a prayer is absolute nonsense, insensate arrogance, if deprived of the mystical basis on which it rests. "Self-renewal of the emperor" means purification of his soul, elevation to purely spiritüal regions, which alone could grant that power to control the forces of Nature, unrevealed [1] to ordinary mortals, whereby the rain is caused to fall.

During the last centuries the entire mystical character of emperorship was lost: Emperors became ordinary mortals, although very great artists were among them, such as Ch'ien Lung. The majority of Chinese mandarins and literary men, especially modern ones, know nothing of the ancient symbolism. But all this does not do away with the necessity of penetrating fully into the mysticism and its symbols. In that way alone can be attained a correct idea of the imperial ritual in the Temple of Heaven, with the Altar of Heaven (T'ien T'an) and the Temple of Agriculture, with the altar of the first agriculturist (Hsien Nung T'an) which stands close by. One must not

[1] Not necessarily "supernatural."

imagine that a Chinese temple is like a European cathedral amid a crowd of houses, or even in an open square. The Temple of Heaven is a great complexity of buildings and forests, covering a large number of acres and surrounded by a wall nearly four miles long.

Having passed through the Ch'ien Mên gate, along the Ch'ien Mên and the Yung-ting Mên Boulevards, across the famous Beggars' Bridge, I knocked at the first gate of the temple park. Then began a walk of hours.

The gate in the red wall was opened.

The entrance was a surprise. No temple could yet be seen. I felt as though I were in a strange dream-landscape, in some elysian meadow. Walking along an avenue of very old trees, I could see nothing but trees on all sides—cedars, thuyas and willows. Although winter had set in the trees still retained some yellow leaves; the ground was covered with them and with yellowish moss. The strangeness of the place was still further emphasised by herds of black oxen peacefully grazing under these old trees. I had never seen such magnificent cattle in China. Are they the descendants of a breed centuries old, preserved only in this temple? I understood already, before being told by the Chinese guide who had been imposed on me that they were the sacred animals from which would be chosen the victim sacrificed on the altar.

The long avenue of trees, centuries old, led to a second wall, green-tiled, and a second gate, the central one of three. Once more I found myself in a large open space full of ancient trees.

The Temple of Heaven

The guide took me towards the south-east, across a little marble bridge, over a lake full of lotuses, to a gate in a low wall, through which we passed into a small court. In the midst of four small pavilions with green tiles stands a larger pavilion, approached by a flight of marble stairs.

Within these walls there reigns a strange and sacred silence. Beyond two walls, surrounded by solitary forests, was the Chai Kung; my Chinese guide called it, "the Hall of Purification." [1] This is the consecrated temple where in lonely prayer and meditation the emperor used to pass the night before the great ceremony of offering. Only after this spiritual concentration, after a night of solitude and fasting, absorbed in the thought of God, the emperor, the Son of Heaven, was worthy to ascend the Altar of Heaven.

The guide unlocked a door and led me into a dim hall in which stood a throne before a light brown screen of five leaves, richly carved with Imperial five-clawed dragons in deeper brown. Only the Emperor is allowed to use these dragons as symbols.[2] On this throne, the symbols of occult

[1] *Chai* means in this case "purification" as well as "fasting" and "abstinence." It probably also means in this connection "meditation" and "concentration of thought on the Deity."

[2] Volumes might be written about the symbolism of the Chinese dragon. Originally it was like that of all ancient religions, the "symbol of immortality and wisdom, of secret knowledge, and of eternity." Just as the hierophants of Egypt and Babylon identified themselves with the symbolical dragon, so the body of the initiated Chinese emperor was called the "dragon-body." The dragon had besides its religious also a cosmological meaning, but it would take us too far afield to dilate on this.

wisdom at his back, the emperor sat awaiting the break of day, which occurred at a quarter to six. Then he went to sacrifice.

On very rare occasions, the most sacred of them being the winter solstice, the emperor left the Forbidden City through the Southern Gate at the Chêng-Yang Mên or Ch'ien Mên, which is only opened for the emperor, and through which no one else may pass. He was seated in a sedan-chair of yellow silk, preceded by an elephant, escorted by the highest princes and mandarins on horseback, accompanied by music, pajongs, and banners. In the spring the emperor went to the temple to pray for rain and for a rich harvest. At the winter solstice he came, as serious Chinese literati assure us, laden with the guilt and sin of his people, to give account of the occurrences of the year drawing to its end. After the sacrifice he prayed for Heaven's forgiveness and blessing. Then he invoked his ancestors.

The guide conducted me from Chai Kung, across the lotus-lake, to another small lake, and then to the right through a forest of primeval trees resembling firs.

The walk through this wood of silent pines, with the breeze rustling through their boughs, is not at all like going through a temple according to European ideas. I had got accustomed in Peking to the idea that a grand architectural complex is nearly always built in harmony with surrounding Nature, and I felt here more deeply impressed with peace than ever I felt in any cathedral built of stone.

The Temple of Heaven

We came to the end of the dense fir-wood, and suddenly there opened a wide circular plain surrounded by pines, thuyas, and cedars, bare beneath the blue sky. A circular wall of a pinkish hue, like the Forbidden City, covered with bluish-mauve [1] tiles, encloses the white marble Altar of Heaven the most beautiful example of religious art I had ever seen.

There it stood in majestic simplicity, nothing but three circular stories of white marble, massive and severe. Solitary, shining like the soul of whiteness, it stood under the deep blue sky, amid the silent beauty of the woods, quite open, pointing straight to heaven.

I felt intuitively that these three white circular stories symbolised the three mystic regions of existence, the three highest states of being. The seven stories of the Borobodoer symbolise the complete mystical structure of the Divine Revelation in the Universe, the four polygons the material, the three circular the supra-material. This sublime Altar of Heaven (*T'ien T'an*) typifies only the three highest regions, the eternal spheres,

[1] The various colours in Chinese temples and buildings are not used accidentally, but founded on a symbolism of colours well known in mysticism ever since the earliest ages. The imperial pale yellow is the symbol of "the highest intellectuality"; the blue of the tiles that of "pure religious sentiment"; the violet of "high spirituality." The Forbidden City is also called *Tzŭ Ch'êng*—that is, "Violet City." This *Tzŭ* is generally translated by "purple," but "violet" is more correct and is so given in the latest English and Chinese Dictionary published by Chinese literati (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1909).

divided into sub-regions of multiples of the mystical number three—the Trinity.

The multiples of three run like a mystical rhythm through this noble altar, for from Three, the triple birth from One God—Father, Son, Holy Ghost—all revelations in the highest regions arose. The Altar of Heaven is a wonderful emblem of the rhythm of the divine revelation from the Trinity. It is one of the most ancient symbols of the secret doctrine of the One God, revealed in the universe, a doctrine that forms the indestructible foundation of all great world-religions.

The diameter of the lower story is 210 feet, of the middle one 150 feet, and of the highest 90 feet. The stories are accessible from the four sides of the compass by three stairs of nine—that is, three times three—stairs each. The columns of the stories number 180, 108, and 72. The rhythms of three decrease in the multiples to the unit, corresponding to the highest level of the regions. In the same way in the universe, everything revealed on attaining higher development unifies itself into the Deity, the Oneness. In the highest region, the top story, is symbolised the attainment to unity—the origin. In the centre of this highest story lies one solitary block of marble surrounded by a circle of nine blocks, this surrounded by one of eighteen, then one of twenty-seven, and so on until the outer circle numbers eighty-one. The central round block of marble from which the whole altar expands in multiples of three, descending in larger multiples towards the lower stories, is the

holy of holies of the whole great Temple of Heaven, called the Centre of the Universe.

When the emperor had mounted the three stairs of three times three steps of the altar, thus reaching the uppermost region, he knelt down on the central circular block. He was now surrounded first by the outer circle of blocks on this story, and further by the circle of the horizon, thus being in the centre of the universe. Here the Son of Heaven lay prostrate beneath Heaven, which alone is his superior, in the centre of an unending temple of which the walls are the blue skies, its cupola the canopy of heaven.

On that day of prayer there were placed on the altar the sacred ancient tablets of *Shang Ti*, or Supreme Being, the One God, and those of four imperial ancestors. The emperor also worshipped the inferior cosmic Logoi: sun, moon, planets, and constellations; of which the most ancient esoteric doctrine speaks in its revelations concerning the origin of the cosmos. The emperor offered to Heaven [1] a cylindrical piece of blue jasper (*pi*), one foot in diameter, and twelve rolls of silk. On an enormous furnace, with three stairs, nine feet high, an arrow-shot away from the altar to the south-east, an entire ox, a perfectly-shaped black animal, was burned as an offering.

[1] In later ages the word *T'ien* (Heaven) is generally used for *Shang Ti*, the Supreme Being. This has caused some confusion, but on the tablet stands really *Shang Ti*, the Supreme Ruler, and there is no doubt that, as on one of the altars of Athens, sacrifices were offered to the one living God on the Altar of Heaven (Rev. F. B. Meyer).

Nowhere did I so fully feel what it means to worship God as I did by this marble altar, bare beneath the open sky; without images, without decoration, with no ornament but some carving on borders and pillars, without any priesthood, awful in its simplicity.

Even Dr. Legge, the missionary, the translator of the Chinese classics, who took everything in China that was not Christian to be heathen, was overwhelmed by his emotion at this sacred spot. He reverently took off his shoes in order not to desecrate the altar, and exclaimed, " If ever God was worshipped in China, it must have been here."

If the learned missionary had been better versed in the secret doctrine as well of Christianity as of other religions, he would have felt in other places in Peking that no heathen idolatry but pure divine piety erected those temples of wisdom and beauty.

The Altar of Heaven is really a remnant of the very oldest, the pre-historic religion of the Chinese,[1] who did not worship idols, but the One God, the God of original Christendom.

Surely the ritual was kept scrupulously pure. No priesthood forced itself between the Emperor and God, no statue was ever allowed in this sacred spot. Only the Son of Heaven, the sins of all the people resting on him, in his uplifted hands the

[1] Although the Temple of Heaven was only built in 1421 by the Emperor Yung Lo and afterwards renewed and enlarged by the Emperor Ch'ien Lung, the Altar of Heaven was imitated from a model known from the very earliest times.

fate of the whole nation, bent his knee to the One God, the *Shang Ti*, with prayer and sacrifice, after a lonely night of retirement in the Hall of Purification.

* * * * *

Reluctantly I allowed the guide to take me away from all this beauty. What more could come after this? I had now seen the most sublime sight of all.

Through the gate of the surrounding wall I passed; walked once more under silent trees; through a smaller circular wall. Within is a small temple with a deep blue roof. It is the only temple to which admittance is still denied. Here the soul-tablets of the ancestral emperors are kept, and the tablet consecrated to *Shang Ti*, the Highest Ruler, to God.

Again a square court with fir-trees, then in a wall three high gates, one of which was opened for me, then another avenue—long, stately, wide, royal, with lofty pines on either side. How magnificent were these upright trees of Life[1] standing unchangeable through the ages! How splendid was this avenue! Would there never come an end to this Temple of Heaven?

After a long walk another wall rose up. I passed through another gate and again I stood unexpectedly before a wide, open square with a temple of white marble in the midst. As before

[1] In China the pine-tree or *Sung-shu* is the symbol of prolonged life, eternal faithfulness, &c.

I saw three white marble terraces. But on these stood a large temple with three cobalt-blue roofs, the uppermost surmounted by a gilt ball.

It is a gigantic structure, worthy to have been built by gods. It is the temple whose blue roofs one sees from Peking's ramparts towering above everything else. The sombre, heavy, deep, cobalt-blue roofs are wonderfully impressive. Between them are walls of brilliant red, bright green, and gold, the whole supported by the white marble terraces.

And yet this vivid splendour of colour could not impress me so powerfully, it could not impel me to devotion as did the plain white Altar of Heaven that I had just left.

I knew this was the *Ch'i-nien Tien* (the Temple of Prayer for the Year); I read this in golden characters, Chinese and Manchu, on a tablet between the partitions of the highest roof. Here the Emperor used to come at the beginning of spring to sacrifice and to pray for an abundant harvest.

Only many, many years after the Emperor Yung Lo erected the Altar of Heaven was this temple built by order of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung. In 1899 it was struck by lightning and destroyed—an ominous sign, followed by the disaster of 1900—but it was immediately rebuilt after the old plan. This temple would have impressed me much more powerfully if I had not first seen the Altar of Heaven, the clear, even beauty of which bestows a divine peace, holier than the emotion caused

by the full chord of colour of this splendid monument.

The guide now brought me through another gate; it was a wonderful sensation suddenly to walk on yellow moss under the silent firs, in the solemn solitude of the wood. The imposing white and blue temple had disappeared like a vision in a dream; in the peaceful forest not a sigh could be heard. Everything slept in profound repose.

I went to look again at the white altar, T'ien T'an. For a long time I gazed upon it, and all unrest departed from me. I saw only its snowy purity, only the blue sky above, and around it the distant trees stretching their branches towards the light.

It grieved me to think that this sublime symbol would be lost, and this consecrated ground, once approached only by a select few, thrown open to the profane steps of a curious Western crowd. For years the tragic Emperor Kuang Hsü, a prisoner on an island in the Violet City, had not visited it, when in 1900 the savage British-Indian troops pitched their disorderly camp within its sacred walls. And on the pure Altar of God they burned their cattle, visited by the plague. But, just as in the Hall of the Classics and the Temple of Confucius, I felt immediately the certainty within me of a glorious distant future, and this conviction filled my heart with joy. In the fulness of time the human race will rise above the regions of materialism towards the great spiritual Light. Then the idols will fall from their unstable

pedestals, and the powers of priesthood and obscurity will be driven away. In those future ages the white marble altar will be re-erected in its grand simplicity, massive and bare beneath the arching sky. And once more the sage will ascend the sacred terraces, kneel and pray to the one, endless, eternal God, who is the beginning and the end of all men and things.

I saw the dead past; I saw also the living future.

Down with the stifling walls that hide the divine surrounding it with darkness and delusion! Away with the black phantoms whose shades interpose themselves between humanity and the great light! Open the Altar of Heaven to the fresh air. In the midst of pure nature the mage who rules by knowledge and love ascends the three stairs to the very highest, kneeling before Him who is the origin of all, the one Father of all nations of East and West, who all are brethren and equals before His eye.

THE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

CHAPTER XVI

THE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

I HAVE tried to give in this book an idea of the wisdom and beauty that are the expression of the Chinese soul. Here and there I seem to hear the remark that this is nothing but poetical vision and not science, that the sober truth is different, that not a sinologue speaks but only an artist.

I cannot here expatiate on the truth, shining through all the ages, that poetical vision is the only reality, that there is higher reality in the beautiful dream of one poet than in a hundred scientific researches by a hundred "scholars." The splendours of Peking—the Lama Temple, the Yellow Temple, the Confucius Temple, the Hall of the Classics, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven and so many others—were not built by mere scholars but by artists. These artists were at the same time philosophers: and the mysticism symbolised in these splendours escapes most sinologues. But it speaks in intimate terms to the poet, who understands it as the simple language of his Father.

In reality the whole of Peking is one great religious symbolism and its splendid monuments are built upon a mystical idea, just as its government was originally "one great, religious symbolism, crystallised in political forms." [1]

When we look for the internal power that sustained China through the ages, we must not study the decay and degeneration, the stupidity and superstition of the masses, so long deprived of education. We must try to understand the religious symbolism of its political institutions and architecture, the wisdom of its philosophy, and the beauty of its literature.

That China has already existed for fifty centuries, and still exists, can only be explained by its inner power greater than that of other empires. China existed, blossoming out into wisdom and philosophy, when Egypt and Assyria were at their culmination, when Troy and Carthage were built, when Rome was not, and Britain was unknown. China saw the death of Greece, the fall of Rome. All has come to ruin and vanished in the course of centuries: of all the great empires of antiquity China alone remains.

"If any reason be required for China's obstinate conservatism of its national existence, it is doubtless a case of the "survival of the fittest," Chêng-chang Lu says quite correctly in his striking article in the *London and China Express*.

[1] Samuel Johnson, "Oriental Religions, and their Relation to Universal Religion: China" (Boston: Houghton, Miffin & Co.; Cambridge: Riverside Press).

The Mutual Understanding

Wu T'ing-fang, the late Chinese Ambassador in America, admitted frankly in his brilliant address to the University of Illinois that "as far as the material and scientific side of civilisation are concerned, China certainly is inferior to the West." "But," he added pointedly, and with gentle sarcasm, "we believe that there are many aspects of our philosophy and ethics, be it said in passing, which play a greater part in our daily life than is perhaps the case with your philosophy and your ethics in your life, and which are quite well worth the study and consideration of the West."

Wu T'ing-fung's brilliant speech is in some points a confession of faith. Is it not beautiful, what he tells us to expect from the future, thereby silently condemning the ferocious armaments and war budgets of the West? "One more chapter will be added to the history of civilisation, a chapter in which East and West, putting away all sentiments of antagonism and prejudice, will unite, not in the consummation of power, but in the victories of peace, aggressive only in the search for Truth and Light, inexorable only in the maintenance of Justice."

And is it not true and a supreme testimony for China, that which Wu here says of his fatherland: "We are democrats. Practically we have no aristocracy of blood and birth, only one of genius and education."

And he goes further still, looking into the future: "There exists no longer an aristocracy

of nations or races, only one of genius and of knowledge.

How moving is the love of literature shown at the death (in 1909) of Chang Chih-tung, Viceroy of the Liang Kiang and afterwards a member of the Grand Council, a man of the highest literary attainments! I refer to it as a proof that even now the love of literature is innate in the Chinese. When such an exalted mandarin dies the family must inform the Emperor of the death by an official document. Well, even on his deathbed Chang Chih-tung was busy editing this communication, scrutinising it carefully, that its style might be flawless, altering a character here and there that it might be entirely literary and purely classical. Such a love for literature in such a people may work wonders in the future.

The saddest thing that could have happened to an artist and lover of beauty in the tragic encounter between East and West was the desecration of the mystery that was the symbolism of Peking, the City of the Emperors. Imagine hordes of black barbarians from far-away Africa conquering Paris, destroying the greatest treasures of art in the Louvre and the Luxembourg, burning down Versailles and St. Cloud. Think of their rough soldiery gambling and drinking, camping in Notre-Dame and other cathedrals, forcing their way into houses, murdering, burning, looting, wantonly soiling or smashing everything sacred, beautiful, and beloved. This gives an idea of what happened twice in Peking—in 1860 and 1900.

The Mutual Understanding

The Forbidden City, where stood the holy throne of the god-emperor, the centre of the whole symbolism of religious architecture, was violated in 1900 by the Western soldiers and turned into a camp.[1]

The imperial apartments were desecrated, the imperial beds slept in, the most intimate sanctuaries entered and used for housing soldiers. Even the holiest temple of China was not spared. In the Temple of Heaven, that enclosed the most sacred altar of the world, thousands of half-civilised British-Indian troops encamped, and the air was polluted by the burning of diseased cattle, of which they made charcoal.

The treasures of Peking were profaned; the profound mystery of the Forbidden City was violated; and the godhead within, the emperor, fled with the dowager empress.

The hated foreigner trod with his irreverent feet the sacred ground of the Violet City. Even inquisitive tourists were admitted, pointing their cameras at things that formerly no mortal eyes were allowed to see.

The Forbidden City may now be quite as rigorously isolated as before; foreign diplomats alone enter it on specially appointed reception

[1] In Pierre Loti's "Les derniers Jours de Pékin" there is a beautiful and poetic description of the invasion of the Forbidden City and the looting of Peking. In consequence of his lack of acquaintance with sinology Loti makes grave errors in his descriptions, but his rendering of the desecration of the mysterious city is very striking.

days, and then only under escort and in a special place for audiences.[1] But its mystery is violated like that of a Vestal dishonoured by barbarians.

I use the words "barbarians" and "vandals" because, as a servant of holy art, I cannot characterise with any other words the scandalous destruction of the Yüan Ming Yüan palace by Lord Elgin in 1860 and the looting of Peking in 1900. I cannot imagine a war between any two civilised nations during which the National Gallery in London, the Louvre in Paris, the Vatican in Rome, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg would be wantonly destroyed and burned down. Whatever the faults of China may have been, the so-called civilised armies of "Christian" nations could in no circumstances have the right to make havoc in Peking as the Vandals did in Rome. And in the scales of divine justice China's wrongdoing was very light, even including the barbaric horror of the attack on the legations in 1900, compared with the injustice inflicted on her by the West.

I cannot and will not describe here the long series of humiliations inflicted on the Chinese in bygone years. The most scandalous of all was the so-called Opium War waged by "Christian England" against "heathen China" in 1840, in order to enforce the introduction of the pernicious

[1] Most of the conferences and negotiations of the ambassadors with the high mandarins take place in the Wai wu Pu, in the Tartar City.

drug that would poison and enervate the whole Chinese nation. That this injustice is now admitted, that England now collaborates nobly and loyally with the Chinese government to abolish the opium abuse, cannot yet blot out the moral impression of that atrociously unjust war, which has burned itself into the soul of the Chinese people.[1]

The war of France and England in 1856 was not less dishonourable, and history, always just, has written this clearly on her scrolls.

One after the other China's finest harbours were stolen by "Christian" wars and annexations, and as the spoliation proceeded China's distrust and wrath increased; Kiao-Chau, Wei Ha Wei, Port Arthur, Hongkong, Talienwan, King-Chau-Wan, and other similar names thrill the Chinese soul with indignation as the name of Alsace Lorraine stirs the soul of the French. Had it not been for these deep wounds in China's heart the Boxer horrors of 1900 would never have happened; but the past is the past and cannot be undone.

In his address quoted above, Wu T'ing-fang said: "China's foreign relations in the past were a sustained, merciless aggression and a long, helpless resistance. There were mistakes and

[1] Samuel Johnson says, bitterly but truly, in his "Oriental Religions: China"—"The war was waged for the right to violate native law in the interest of traders in opium," and Commissioner Elliot, in a letter of April 6, 1839, to Queen Victoria (quoted by Johnson on pp. 143 and 144 of his book), calls the opium trade "a trade which every friend of humanity must deplore."

misunderstanding on both sides. Neither was entirely free of blame, because neither tried to understand the other."

These last words touch the core of the international Chinese question. The one thing needed before all others is "mutual understanding." Chinese and Westerns do not understand, they secretly despise one another. The Chinese are now trying to assimilate Western ideas and Western science. An astonishing number of works on European economics, sociology, philosophy, are now being translated into Chinese and read in China.

What has Europe done in order to understand China?

What has it done for the study of sinology?

What men does it send to Peking to maintain relations with China? Who are the European and American consuls and ambassadors? Before very long the Eastern Question will determine the politics of the world. Peking and Tokio will become within measurable time the great centres of international politics.

The greatest and most frequent mistake of some European Powers and of most of the smaller countries in their relations with China is that they send there diplomats and consuls who do not know the Chinese language and people.[1] There are many diplomats who dislike the country, and if no one

[1] Amongst diplomats and consuls who were sinologues I mention: Von Brandt, Francis Wade, Herbert Giles, H. F. Mayers, A. Vissière, and I might give a list of other names.

suitable can be induced to go men are sent who, although recognised as capable, lack the one thing needful—knowledge of the Chinese national soul, the Chinese way of thinking, and the Chinese language. And every sinologue knows it to be the truth that without these three things all intercourse with China is impossible, all negotiations useless.

Mutual understanding! This will only be possible when Europe sends no longer its bad, middling, good, but its *best* diplomats to Peking. They must be men who either themselves know the Chinese people and language, such as eminent sinologues like the former German Ambassador von Brandt or the English Sir John Jordan, or who have under them secretaries and interpreters who have won their golden spurs as sinologues.

European States, like England, the Netherlands, and France, as well as America, possess colonies, where hundreds of thousands of Chinese coolies and emigrants live. These feel themselves one with their brethren in China, they long to proclaim the *Civis Sinicus Sum* as the Roman proclaimed his citizenship. For these colonial empires a capable diplomatic and consular representative in China, attending to the smallest details, is a matter of life and death. They must have there a centre of tried, experienced sinologues, for the future weal and woe of their colonies may depend on it. Neglect of this important duty by smaller colonial powers like the Netherlands might in the

future even mean suicide for them as colonial states.

It cannot be foreseen, it cannot approximately be foretold what may be the outcome of the disturbed, fermenting China of to-day. Hatred of the foreigner, caused by Western aggressions, by the ignorance and excitement of the Young Chinese Jingoes, and by the present lack of mutual understanding increases more and more violently; it may culminate in a paroxysm compared with which the Boxer revolt may seem child's play.

There are thousands of young Chinese students and *literati* full of confused, half-digested ideas, intoxicated by the unaccustomed wine of modern education. They are civilised Boxers, unbalanced, uncontrolled, dangerous, and by their incitements they may cause the most terrific and unforeseen calamities.

Mutual understanding is the only safeguard, the only way to avoid the brewing storm. The Chinese must give up his wrathful distrust, his proud feeling of superiority. He must be taught to understand that not all Westerns are "foreign devils," that there really are Europeans who understand and honour China's beauty and wisdom, who visit China for other than commercial reasons, and who desire to come into contact with the Chinese.

The Western must try to penetrate into the mystery of the Chinese national mind; study of sinology must be encouraged in the West at all universities. And a superior body of future

diplomats and consuls must be formed who will go to China, and especially to Peking, not as strangers but as reliable, competent scholars and students of the Chinese country, people, and language.

Only then mutual understanding will become possible.[1]

[1] Putnam Weale also has pointed this out; he says: "Only the most capable and brilliant diplomatic officials—men whose intelligence will help to shape events and not be led by them, and who will act with absolute firmness when the time for such action comes—should be assigned to such a difficult post as Peking."

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